SERMONS

UPON

Pſalm CXXX. Ver. 4.

But there is Forgiveneſs with thee; that thou mayſt be feared.

BY

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LONDON,

Printed by *J. D.* for *Brabazon Aylmer* at the three Pigeons, over againſt the Royal Exchange in *Cornhill.* 1696.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMONS
OF THE
Forgiveneſs of Sins.

PSAL. CXXX. 4.

But there is Forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayſt be feared.

THE Pſalmiſt, in the firſt and ſecond Verſes, addreſſes to God with earneſt Deſires for his ſaving Mercies: *Out of the Depths have I cried to thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my Voice: let thine Ear be attentive to my Supplication.* He humbly deprecates the ſevere Inquiry of Divine Juſtice; *ver.* 3. *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark Iniquities: O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?* If God ſhould with an exact Eye obſerve our Sins, and call us to an account, who can ſtand in Judgment? who can Ver. 3.

endure that firy Trial? The beſt Saints, tho never ſo innocent and unblameable in the ſight of Men, tho never ſo vigilant and watchful over their Hearts and Ways, are not exempted from the Spots of humane Frailty, which according to the Rigour of the Law, would expoſe them to a condemning Sentence. He relieves and ſupports himſelf under this fearful Apprehenſion with the Hopes of Mercy: *But there is Forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayſt be feared.* 'Tis in thy Power and thy Will, to pardon repenting and returning Sinners, *that thou mayſt be feared.* The Fear of God in Scripture ſignifies the humble holy Reverence of him, as our heavenly Father and Soveraign, that makes us cautious leſt we ſhould offend him, and careful to pleaſe him. For this Reaſon the Fear of God is comprehenſive of all Religion, of *the whole Duty of Man*, to which it is introductive, and is a principal Ingredient in it. The Clemency and compaſſionate Mercy of God is the Cauſe of an ingenuous filial Fear, mix'd with Love and Affiance in the Breaſts of Men. Other Attributes, his Holineſs that fram'd the Law, Juſtice that ordain'd the Puniſhment of Sin, Power that inflicts it,

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render his Majeſty terrible, and cauſe a Flight from him as an Enemy. If all muſt periſh for their Sins, no Prayers or Praiſes will aſcend to Heaven, all Religious Worſhip will ceaſe for ever: But his tender Mercy ready to receive humble Suppliants, and reſtore them to his Favour, renders him amiable and admired, and draws us near to him.

There are two Propoſitions to be conſidered in the Verſe:

1. That Forgiveneſs belongs to God.

2. That the forgiving Mercy of God is a powerful Motive of Adoration and Obedience. I propound to diſcourſe of the firſt, and to touch upon the ſecond in the Application.

In managing the Point with Light and Order, 'tis requiſite to conſider; 1*ſt*. What is contain'd in *Forgiveneſs*. 2*dly*. The Arguments that demonſtrate that Forgiveneſs belongs to God.

1. What is contained in Forgiveneſs. This neceſſarily ſuppoſes Sin, and Sin a Law that is violated by it: The Law implies a Sovereign Law-giver, to whoſe declared Will Subjection is due, and who will exact an Account in Judgment

of Mens Obedience or Diſobedience to his Law, and diſpenſe Rewards and Puniſhments accordingly. God by the cleareſt Titles *is our King, our Law-giver and Judg:* for he is our Maker and Preſerver, and conſequently has a full Propriety in us, and abſolute Authority over us: and by his ſovereign and ſingular Perfections is qualified to govern us. A derived Being is neceſſarily in a State of Dependance and Subjection. All the Ranks of Creatures in the World are order'd by their Maker: his *Kingdom rules over all.* Thoſe in the loweſt degree of Being are order'd by Power. Senſitive Creatures are determin'd by the Impulſes of Nature to their Actions; for having no Light to diſtinguiſh between moral Good and Evil, they have no Choice, and are incapable of receiving a Law. Intelligent Creatures, endowed with judicious and free Faculties, an Underſtanding to diſcern between moral Good and Evil, and a Will to chooſe or reject what is propounded to them, are capable of a Law to direct and regulate their Liberty.

To Man a Law was given by the Creator, (the Copy of his Wiſdom and Will) that has all the Perfections of a Rule:

Rule: 'Tis clear and compleat, injoining what is eſſentially good, and forbidding what is eſſentially evil. God governs Man conveniently to his Nature: and no Service is pleaſing to him but the Reſult of our Reaſon and Choice, the Obedience of our ſupreme leading Powers. Since the Fall, the Light of the Underſtanding compared with the bright Diſcovery it afforded of our whole Duty in our Original State, is either like the Twilight of the Evening, the faint and dim Remains of the Light of the Day, when Night draws a dark Vail over the World, or like the dawning of the Morning, when the riſing Sun begins to ſcatter the Darkneſs of the Night. The latter Compariſon I think is more juſt and regular; for 'tis ſaid, that the Son of God *enlightens every Man that comes into the World.* The innate Light diſcovers there is a ſtreight Line of Truth to regulate our Judgment, and a ſtreight Line of Vertue to regulate our Actions. Natural Conſcience is a Principle of Authority, directing us to chooſe and practiſe Vertue, and to avoid Vice; and according to our Neglect or Compliance with its Dictates reflects upon us. 'Tis hardly preſumable that any are ſo pro-

digiouſly wicked, as not to be convinc'd of the natural Rectitude in things: they can diſtinguiſh between what is fair and what is fraudulent in Dealings, and acknowledg in the general, and in judging of others, the Equity of things, tho they elude the Force of the Conviction in the Application to themſelves. Now ſince common Reaſon diſcovers there is a common Rule, there muſt be a common Judg to whom Men are accountable for the Obliquity or Conformity of their Actions to that Rule. The Law of God is revealed in its Purity and Perfection in the Scripture.

The Law binds firſt to Obedience, and in neglect of it to Puniſhment. Sin is defin'd by St. *John* to be *the Tranſgreſſion of the Law.* The Omiſſion of what is commanded, or doing what is forbidden, is a Sin. Not only the Luſts that break forth into Action and Evidence, but inward Inclinations, contrary to the Law, are Sin. From hence reſults a Guilt upon every Sinner, which includes the Imputation of the Fault, and Obligation to Puniſhment. There is a natural Connexion between the Evil of Doing, and the Evil of Suffering: the Violation of the Law is juſtly revenged by the Vio-

Violation of the Perſon that breaks it. It is an impoſſible Imagination, that God ſhould give a Law not enforc'd with a Sanction. This would caſt a Blemiſh upon his Wiſdom, for the Law would cancel it ſelf, and defeat his Ends in giving it: it would reflect a high Diſhonour upon his Holy Majeſty, as if he were indifferent with reſpect to Vertue or Vice, and diſregarded our Reverence or Rebellion againſt his Authority. The Apoſtle declares, that *all the World are become guilty before God*; that is, juſtly chargeable with their Crimes, and liable to his Judgment. The Act of Sin is tranſient, and the Pleaſure vaniſhes; but the Guilt, if not pardoned and purged away, remains for ever in the Records of Conſcience. *The Sin of* Judah *is written with a Pen of Iron, and with the Point of a Diamond; it is graven on the Tables of the Heart.* When the Books of eternal Life and Death ſhall be opened at the Laſt Day, all the unpardoned Sins of Men, with their killing Aggravations, will be found written in indelible Characters, and ſhall be ſet in order before their Eyes, to their Confuſion: *The righteous Judg has ſworn he will forget none of their Works.*

According to the Number and Heinouſneſs of their Sins, a Sentence ſhall paſs upon them: No Excuſes ſhall ſuſpend the Judgment, nor mitigate the immediate Execution of it.

The Forgiveneſs of Sins contains the Abolition of their Guilt, and Freedom from the deſerved Deſtruction conſequent to it. This is expreſs'd by various Terms in Scripture. *Pardon* relates to ſome Damage and Offence which the offended Party may ſeverely vindicate. Now altho the bleſſed God in ſtrictneſs of ſpeaking can receive no Damage by rebellious Creatures, being infinitely above the Impreſſion of Evil: yet as our Saviour ſpeaks of one that looks upon a Woman with an impure Deſire, that he has committed Adultery with her in his Heart, tho the Innocence of the Woman be unſtained; ſo the Sins of Men, being Acts of foul Ingratitude againſt his Goodneſs, and notorious Unrighteouſneſs againſt his Authority, are in a Senſe injurious to him, which he might juſtly revenge upon them, but his Clemency ſpares them. The *not imputing Sin* is borrowed from the Accounts of Servants with their Maſters; and implies the Account we are obliged to ren-

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der the ſupreme Lord for all his Benefits which we have ſo wretchedly miſimproved: he might righteouſly exact of us ten thouſand Talents that are due to him, but he is graciouſly pleaſed to croſs the Book, and freely to diſcharge us. The *purging from Sin*, implies 'tis very odious and offenſive in God's Eyes, and has a ſpecial reſpect to the expiatory Sacrifices, of which 'tis ſaid, that *without Blood there was no Remiſſion.* This was typical of the precious Blood of the Son of God that purges the Conſcience *from dead Works*; from the deadly Guilt of Sin that cleaves to the Conſcience of the Sinner. By the application of his Blood the crimſon Guilt is waſh'd away, and the pardoned Sinner is accepted as one pure and innocent.

2. I ſhall next demonſtrate, that Forgiveneſs belongs to God. This will be evident by the following Conſiderations.

1*ſt*. 'Tis the high and peculiar Prerogative of God to pardon Sin. His Authority made the Law, and gives Life and Vigour to it, therefore he can remit the Puniſhment of the Offender. This is evident from the Proportion of humane Laws: For tho ſubordinate Judges have

have only a limited Power, and muſt acquit or condemn according to the Law, yet the Soveraign may diſpenſe with it. This is declared in Scripture by God himſelf: *I, even I am he, that blots out thy Tranſgreſſions for my Name ſake:* He repeats it with an Emphaſis. He is proclaimed with this Royal Title; *The Lord, gracious and merciful, pardoning Iniquity, Tranſgreſſion and Sin.* 'Tis a Diſpenſation of Divine Soveraignty to pardon the Guilty.

Iſa. 43.

'Tis true, God pardons as a Father, according to that moſt gracious Promiſe, *I will ſpare them, as a Father ſpares his Son that ſerves him*; but as inveſted with the Dignity of a Soveraign. Our Saviour directs us, in the perfect Form of Prayer dictated to his Diſciples, to pray to God for the Forgiveneſs of our Sins, as *our Father ſitting in Heaven* upon a high Throne, from whence he pronounces our Pardon. His Majeſty is equally glorious with his Mercy in that bleſſed Diſpenſation. His Royal Supremacy is more conſpicuous in the Exerciſe of Mercy towards repenting Sinners, than in the Acts of Juſtice upon obſtinate Offenders. As a King is more a King by the pardoning humble Suppli-

Mal. 3.

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ants by the Operation of his Scepter, than in ſubduing Rebels by the Power of the Sword: For in Acts of Grace he is above the Law, and over-rules its Rigour, in Acts of Vengeance he is only ſuperiour to his Enemies.

'Tis the peculiar Prerogative of God to pardon Sin. The Prophet challenges all the reputed Deities of the Heathens as defective in this Royal Power: *Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning Iniquity, Tranſgreſſion and Sin?* Mic. 7. The Phariſees ſaid true, *Who can forgive Sins but God only?* for 'tis an Act of Empire. The judicial Power to pardon is a Flower inſeparable from the Crown: for 'tis founded in a Superiority to the Law, therefore inconſiſtent with a depending Authority. A Creature is as incapable of the Supremacy of God in pardoning Sin, as of his Omnipotence to create a World: for they are both truly infinite. Beſides, the Power of pardoning Sins, neceſſarily implies an univerſal Knowledg of the Minds and Hearts of Men, which are the Fountains of their Actions: and according to their Ingredi[illegible]ncy the moral Good or Evil of them riſes. The more deliberately and wilfully a Sin is committed, the Sinner incurs a greater

greater Guilt, and is obnoxious to a more heavy Puniſhment. Now no Creature can dive into the Hearts of Men: *They are naked and open to the piercing Eye of God alone.* Add farther, the authoritative Power to pardon, has neceſſarily annex'd to it the active Power of diſpenſing Rewards and Puniſhments. Now the Son of God alone *has the Keys of Life and Death in his Hands.*

It may be objected, That our Saviour declares, that *the Son of Man has Power to forgive Sins.* The Anſwer to this will be clear by conſidering, there are two Natures in Chriſt; the Divine Nature, that originally belongs to him, and is proper to his Perſon; and the Humane Nature, which is as it were adoptive, and was voluntarily aſſumed. Now the Divine Perſon is the ſole Principle and Subject of this Royal Dignity, but 'tis exerciſed in its Conjunction with the humane Nature, and attributed to the Son of Man: As in the Humiliation of Chriſt, the Principles of his Sufferings, and the actual Sufferings, are ſolely in the humane Nature, but upon the Account of the perſonal Union, they are attributed to the Divine Perſon. 'Tis ſaid, *The Lord of Glory was crucified,*

fied, and *the Blood of God* redeemed his Church.

The Church of *Rome*, with high Preſumption, arrogates to their Prieſts a judicial Power of forgiving Sins: and by the eaſy Folly of the People, and crafty Deceit of their Inſtructors, exerciſe a Juriſdiction over Conſcience. To avoid the Imputation of Blaſphemy, they pretend there is a double Power of Forgiving, ſupreme and ſubordinate; the firſt belongs to God, the other is delegated by Commiſſion to the Miniſters of the Goſpel. But this is an irreconcileable Contradiction: for the Power to pardon is an Efflux of Supremacy, and incommunicable to the Subject. A Prince that inveſts another with an abſolute Power to pardon, muſt either relinquiſh his Soveraignty, or take an Aſſociate to ſhare in it. This Pretence of the Papiſts is ſuch a lame Evaſion, as that which they are forced to make uſe of to clear themſelves from the Charge of Idolatry in their Worſhip of Angels and Saints: their Excuſe is, that their Worſhip of Angels and Saints is inferiour in degree, and imperfectly divine; as if there could be different Degrees in Divine Worſhip, which is abſolutely and neceſſarily ſupreme.

preme. The Miniſters of the Goſpel have only a declarative Power, as Heralds or Embaſſadors, to propoſe the Terms of the Goſpel for the obtaining Pardon, and to apply the Promiſe of Pardon to thoſe who appear qualified for it. But to pronounce and diſpenſe Pardon, they have no judicial Authority: for 'tis not preſumeable that the wiſe God ſhould inveſt Men with that Authority which they are utterly incapable to exerciſe.

2dly. God is ready to forgive. The Power to pardon without an Inclination to it, affords no Relief in the Agonies of an accuſing Conſcience, and the Terrors of eternal Judgment. The merciful Will of God declared in his Word, is the Foundation of our bleſſed Hope, and encourages us in our Requeſts before his Throne: *For thou Lord art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in Mercy unto all that call upon thee.*

Pſal. 86.

The Attribute of which Pardon is an Emanation, is uſually expreſt by *Grace* and *Mercy*. 'Tis ſaid, the *Grace of God that brings Salvation has appeared unto all Men: We are ſaved by Grace.* Grace implies free Favour. There is in this reſpect a Difference between Love and

and Grace. Love may be ſet upon an Object worthy of it. The primary Object of God's Love is himſelf, whoſe excellent and amiable Perfections are worthy of infinite Love. The Love of Parents to Children is a Duty moſt clearly natural, and Duty leſſens the Deſert of performing it; but Grace is excluſive of all Merit and Dignity in the Subject, and of all Obligation in the Perſon that ſhews it. God's moſt free preventing Grace is exerciſed without any Motive in us that deſerves it.

The Grace of God may be conſider'd as exerciſed in our Creation and our Redemption. In the Creation it was abſolutely free: for Angels and Men were in the State of nothing, there was only a Poſſibility of their Being. Now there could be no attractive Merit before their Exiſtence. 'Tis true, Goodneſs is glorified and crown'd by communicating: The World is a bright Efflux of the Divine Glory; but this does not leſſen the free Goodneſs of the Maker. There was no Conſtraint upon God to make the World for his declarative Glory: for his eſſential Glory is truly infinite, and wants no external Appearance to make it compleat. The Univerſal Church

pays

pays humble Homage to the Great Creator; *acknowledging, that for his Will and Pleaſure all things were created.*

The Divine Goodneſs to Angels and Man in their Original Purity, was Grace: for altho the Image of God ſhining in them was attractive of his Approbation and Acceptance, yet they deſerved no Benefits from him: there is ſuch an infinite Diſtance and Diſproportion between God and the Creatures, that they cannot by a common Right claim any thing as due from his Majeſty. Beſides, he is the productive and conſervative Cauſe of all their active Powers, and the Efficacy of them.

The creating Goodneſs of God is eclips'd in the Compariſon with his ſaving Grace. The firſt ſuppoſes us without any Deſerts of his Favour, but this ſuppoſes our exceedingly bad Deſerts: The firſt was free, but this is merciful and healing Grace. Mercy revives and reſtores us when deſervedly miſerable. This Grace and Mercy is of ſo pure a Nature, that the moſt tender humane Inclinations to relieve the Afflicted, are mix'd with Self-intereſt, compared with the Mercy of God towards us. Our Bowels relent, and Affections are melting

ing at the ſight of Perſons in deep Miſery. But there is an inward and unvoluntary Conſtraint of Nature that excites ſuch feeling Reſentments: and our Compaſſion is moved by Reflection upon our ſelves, conſidering that in this open State we are liable to many Diſaſters and wounding Sorrows: but God is infinitely free from all diſturbing Paſſions, and exempted from all poſſible Evils. To repreſent the immenſe Love and Mercy of God in its endearing Circumſtances, and to demonſtrate his Readineſs to forgive, we muſt conſider what he has done in order to his pardoning Sinners.

1. If we conſider God as the ſupreme Lawgiver and Judg of the World, as the Protector of Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs, and the Revenger of all Diſorders in his moral Government, it became him not to pardon Sinners without the puniſhing Sin in ſuch a manner as might ſatisfy his injur'd Juſtice, and vindicate the Honour of his deſpiſed Law, and declare moſt convincingly his Hatred againſt Sin. Now for theſe great Ends he decreed to ſend his Son from his Boſom, to aſſume our Nature, and to ſuffer the contumelious Calamity of the

Death on the Croſs, to make a Propitiation for our Sins. This was the Contrivance of his high Wiſdom, which the moſt enlightned Angels had no preſaging Notions of. Now can there be a more clear Evidence and convincing Reality, that God is ready to forgive Sins, than the giving his only begotten Son, a Perſon ſo great and ſo dear, the Heir of his Love and Glory, to be a Sacrifice, that he might ſpare us? In this Diſpenſation Love was the regent leading Attribute, to which his Wiſdom, Juſtice and Power were ſubordinate: they were in exerciſe for the more glorious Illuſtration of his Mercy. We have the ſtrongeſt Argument of God's Love in the Death of his Son, for our Pardon was the end of it. From hence 'tis evident, that God is more willing to diſpenſe his pardoning Mercy, than Sinners are to receive it.

2. God's Readineſs to forgive appears in the gracious and eaſy Terms preſcribed in the Goſpel for the obtaining Pardon. There are two ways of Juſtification before God, and they are like two Ways to a City: One is direct and ſhort, but deep and unpaſſable; the other lies in a Circuit, but will bring a Per-

Perſon ſafe to the Place. Thus there is a Juſtification of an innocent Perſon by Works, that ſecures him from the Charge of the Law; and a Juſtification of a Sinner by Faith in our all-ſufficient Saviour. The firſt was a ſhort way to Man in the State of Integrity: the ſecond, ſuch is the Diſtance of the Terms, takes a Compaſs. There is a ſhorter Paſſage from Life to Action, than from Death to Life. There is no Hope or Poſſibility of our legal Juſtification. The Apoſtle ſaith, *That which the Law could not do in that it was weak through the Fleſh, God ſending his own Son in the Likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, and for Sin condemned Sin in the Fleſh.* Rom. 8. The Expiation of Sin, and renewing us into the Image of God, are obtained by the Goſpel. The Law is called, *the Law of Sin and Death:* which muſt be underſtood not as conſider'd in it ſelf, but relatively to our depraved Nature. The Law ſuppoſes Men in a State of uncorrupted Nature, and was given to be a Preſervative of our Holineſs and Felicity, not a Remedy to recover us from Sin and Miſery. It was directive of our Duty, but ſince our Rebellion the Rod is turn'd into a Serpent. The Law is hard and

imperious, ſevere and inexorable, the Tenor of it is, *Do, or die for ever.* It requires a Righteouſneſs entire and unblemiſh'd, which one born in Sin cannot produce in the Court of Judgment. Man is utterly unable by his lapſed Powers to recover the Favour of God, and to fulfil his Obligation by the Law to Obedience. But the Goſpel diſcovers an open eaſy way to Life, to all that will accept of Salvation by the Redeemer. The Apoſtle expreſſes the Difference between the Condition of the Law and the Goſpel in a very ſignificant manner. Moſes *deſcribes the Righteouſneſs which is of the Law, that the Man that does thoſe things ſhall live in them: but the Righteouſneſs which is of Faith ſpeaks on this wiſe, Say not in thine Heart, Who ſhall aſcend into Heaven, that is to bring down Chriſt from above; Who ſhall deſcend into the Deep, that is to bring Jeſus Chriſt again from the dead? but what ſaith it? The Word is nigh thee, that if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth, and ſhalt believe in thy Heart, that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* The meaning of the Apoſtle is, that things in Heaven above, or in the Depths beneath, are of impoſſible Diſ-

Rom. 10.

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covery and Attainment, ſo 'tis equally impoſſible to be juſtified by the Works of the Law. The anxious Sinner ſeeks in vain for Righteouſneſs in the Law, which can only be found in the Goſpel.

It may be objected, that the Condition of the Law, and the Condition of the Goſpel, compar'd relatively to our deprav'd Faculties, are equally impoſſible. The carnal Mind and Affections are as averſe from Repentance and receiving Chriſt as our Lord and Saviour, as from obeying the Law. Our Saviour tells the Jews, *Ye will not come to me that ye may have Life: and no Man can come to me unleſs the Father draw him.* Which Words are highly expreſſive of our utter Impotence to believe ſavingly in Chriſt. But there is a clear Anſwer to this Objection: the Difference between the two Diſpenſations conſiſts principally in this: The Law requires compleat and conſtant Obedience as the Condition of Life, without affording the leaſt ſupernatural Power to perform it. But the Goſpel has the Spirit of Grace a Concomitant with it, by whoſe Omnipotent Efficacy Sinners are revived, and enabled to comply with the Terms of Salvation. The Spirit of the Law is

ſtiled the Spirit of Bondage from its rigorous Effects: it diſcover'd Sin, and terrified the Conſcience, without implanting a Principle of Life that might reſtore the Sinner to a State of Holy Liberty. As the Flame in the Buſh made the Thorns in it viſible, without conſuming them; ſo the firy Law diſcovers Mens Sins, but does not aboliſh them: But *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Chriſt Jeſus*, i. e. *the Goſpel, has freed us from the Law of Sin and Death.* I will more particularly conſider the gracious Terms preſcribed in the Goſpel for the obtaining Pardon; *Repentance towards God, and Faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* The requiring of them is not an arbitrary Conſtitution, but founded in the unchangeable Nature and Congruity of things. Repentance ſignifies a ſincere Change of the Mind and Heart from the Love and Practice of Sin, to the Love and Practice of Holineſs, upon Evangelical and Divine Motives. The principal Ingredients in it are, Reflections with Grief and Shame upon our paſt Sins, with ſtedfaſt Reſolutions of future Obedience. 'Tis a vital Principle productive of Fruits ſutable to it: 'Tis call'd *Repentance from dead Works,*

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Repentance unto Life. 'Tis the Seed of new Obedience. Repentance in order of Nature is before Pardon, but they are inſeparably join'd in the ſame Point of Time. *David* is a bleſſed Inſtance of this: *I ſaid I will confeſs my Tranſ-* Pſal. 32. *greſſions to the Lord, and thou forgaveſt the Iniquity of my Sin.* The Sum and Tenour of the Apoſtles Commiſſion recorded by St. *Luke* is, *That Repentance* Luke 24. *and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in the Name of Chriſt to all Nations.* That a repentant Sinner only is qualified for Pardon, will be evident in conſidering,

1. That an impenitent Sinner is the Object of revenging Juſtice; and 'tis utterly inconſiſtent that pardoning Mercy and revenging Juſtice ſhould be terminated upon the ſame Perſon at the ſame time, in the ſame reſpect. 'Tis ſaid, *The Lord hateth all the Workers of Iniquity; and his Soul hates the Wicked.* The Expreſſion implies the intenſe Degrees of Hatred. In the glorious Appearance of God to *Moſes*, when proclaim'd with the higheſt Titles of Honour, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful, pardoning Iniquity, Tranſgreſſion and Sin*, 'tis added, *he will by no means ſpare the Guilty, i. e.* impenitent Sinners. We

muſt ſuppoſe God to be of a changeable flexible Nature, (which is a blaſphemous Imagination, and makes him like to ſinful Man) if an impenitent Sinner may be received to Favour without a Change in his Diſpoſition. God cannot repent of giving a holy Law, the Rule of our Duty, therefore Man muſt repent of his breaking the Law before he can be reconciled to him. The Truth is, Man conſider'd merely as a Sinner, is not the Object of God's firſt Mercy, *i. e.* of Pity and Compaſſion: for as ſuch he is the Object of God's Wrath; and 'tis a formal Contradiction to aſſert that he is the Object of Love and Hatred at the ſame time, and in the ſame reſpect. But Man, conſider'd as God's Creature, involv'd in Miſery by the Fraud of the Tempter, and his own Folly, was the Object of God's Compaſſion; and the Recovery of him from his forlorn wretched State, was the Effect of that Compaſſion.

2. Tho Mercy conſider'd as a ſeparate Attribute might pardon an impenitent Sinner, yet not in Conjunction and Concord with God's eſſential Perfections. Many things are poſſible to Power abſolutely conſider'd, which God cannot

not do: for his Power is always directed in its Exerciſe by his Wiſdom, and limited by his Will. It would diſparage God's Wiſdom, ſtain his Holineſs, violate his Juſtice, to pardon an impenitent Sinner. The Goſpel by the Promiſe of Pardon to ſuch, would foil it ſelf, and fruſtrate its principal End, which *is to purify us from all Iniquity, and to make us a People zealous of good Works.*

3. If an impenitent Sinner may be pardoned as ſuch, he may be glorified: for that which qualifies a Man for Pardon, qualifies him for Salvation: and the Divine Decree eſtabliſhes an inſeparable Connexion between them; *Whom God juſtifies he glorifies.* If a Sinner dies immediately after his Pardon is paſt, nothing can intercept his being received into Heaven. Now this is utterly impoſſible; the excluſion of ſuch is peremptory and univerſal, *for without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee God.* The Admiſſion of an impenitent Sinner into Heaven, would pollute that holy Place, and unconſecrate the Temple of God wherein his Holineſs ſhines in its Glory. Rom. 8.

It is objected by ſome, that the requiring Repentance to qualify the Sinner for Pardon

Pardon eclipſes the Grace of the Goſpel.

I willingly acknowledg, that a religious Jealouſy, leſt the Freeneſs and Honour of Divine Grace in our Pardon ſhould be leſſen'd, is very becoming a Chriſtian; but 'tis ill-grounded and ill-guided in this Matter. This will be evident by conſidering;

1*ſt*. Repentance is an Evangelical Grace, the Gift of the Redeemer: *Him* Acts 5. *has God raiſed to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Forgiveneſs of Sin.* The Law did not allow of Repentance, nor promiſe Pardon. The Deſign of it was to keep us in the Favour and Communion with God, but afforded no Means of Reconciliation after our offending him. Repentance was no Degree of Perfection before Man's Fall, but is a Relief of his Imperfection after it. The Law call'd the Righteous to Obedience, the Goſpel calls Sinners to Repentance.

2*dly*. There is no Cauſality or Merit in Repentance to procure our Pardon. The Mercy of God for the moſt precious Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt is the only Cauſe of Pardon. A Flood of repenting Tears, an Effuſion of our Blood, are of too low a Price to make

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any Satisfaction to God, to deſerve a Return of his Favour. The moſt ſincere Love of Holineſs, and ſtedfaſt Reſolution to forſake Sin, which is the principal part of Repentance, can be no Satisfaction for our paſt Offences, for 'tis the natural Duty of Man before the commiſſion of Sin: Repentance is only a vital Qualification in the Subject that receives the Pardon.

3*dly*. The Grace of God is very conſpicuous in diſpenſing Pardon, according to the Order of the Goſpel to repenting Sinners. For firſt, Repentance renders the Divine Mercy moſt honourable in the Eſteem of thoſe who partake of it. Our Saviour tells us, *The whole need not a Phyſician, but thoſe who are ſick.* He that feels his Diſeaſe, and is ſtrongly apprehenſive of its Danger, values the Counſel and Aſſiſtance of a Phyſician above all Treaſures. The repenting Sinner who is under the ſtrong Conviction of his Guilt, and his being always obnoxious to the Judgment of God, and eternal Miſery the Conſequent of it, he values the Favour of God as the moſt ſovereign Good, and accounts his Diſpleaſure as the ſupreme Evil. Repentance inſpires flaming Affections

ſections in our Prayers and Praiſes for Pardon. The repenting Sinner prays for Pardon with as much Fervency as *Daniel* pray'd in the Den, to be preſerved from the devouring Lions; or as
Jonah 2. *Jonah* pray'd out of the Belly of Hell for Deliverance. He addreſſes not with faint but fainting Deſires for Mercy; *Give me Pardon, or I die.* The inſenſible Sinner that is ſecure in the Shadow of Death, may offer ſome verbal Requeſts for Pardon, but his Prayer is defective in the Principle: for he never feels the Want of a Pardon; he prays ſo coldly as if unconcern'd whether he be accepted or no. And with what a Rapture of Admiration, and Joy, and thankful Affections, doth the pardon'd Penitent magnify the Divine Mercy? The Chriſtian *Niobe* that was melted into repenting Tears *loved much, becauſe much was forgiven her.*

2. This Eſtabliſhment that Repentance qualifies a Sinner for Pardon, is moſt beneficial to Man, and conſequently moſt illuſtrates pardoning Mercy. We muſt obſerve, that Sin does not only affect us with Guilt, but leaves an inherent Corruption that defiles and debaſes the Sinner, and ſtrongly inclines him

him to relapſe into Rebellion. Now Repentance gives the true Repreſentation of Sin in its penal Conſequences, the Anger of the Almighty, the Terrors of Conſcience, and makes it evident and odious to the Soul. *David* had a piercing Conviction what a foul Sin Adultery was, when his *Bones were broken.* Repenting Sorrow ſtrikes at the Root of Sin, the Love of Pleaſure. This makes us fearful to offend God, and to fly all the alluring Temptations that will betray us to Sin. This makes us obedient. The melted Metal is receptive of any Form. Contrition is join'd with Reſignation: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* was the Voice of repenting *Saul.*

It may be objected, that we read, *God juſtifies the Ungodly,* but the Anſwer is clear. The Apoſtle does not intend by the Ungodly, an impenitent Sinner, but makes the Oppoſition between the Ungodly and one that perfectly obeys the Law, and is conſequently juſtified by Works: and in this Senſe the moſt excellent Saints here are *ungodly.* Beſides, the Apoſtle does not aſſert that God abſolutely pardons the Ungodly, but qualifies the Perſons: *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him*

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that juſtifies the Ungodly, his Faith is counted for Righteouſneſs. Now juſtifying Faith and Repentance are like *Tamar*'s Twins: Repentance is firſt felt, and then Faith exerts it ſelf in applying the Merits of Chriſt's Death for our Pardon.

It is replied by ſome, that all Grace is communicated from Chriſt, as our Head, and ſuppoſes our Union with him, of which Faith is the vital Band, and conſequently the firſt Grace, by which all other Graces are derived to us.

To this I anſwer, there are two Means of our Union with Chriſt: The principal is the quickning Spirit deſcending from Chriſt as the Fountain of the ſupernatural Life, and a lively Faith wrought in us by his pure and powerful Operation, that aſcends from us and cloſes with him. 'Tis ſaid, the ſecond *Adam* was made *a quickning Spirit:* and he that is join'd *to the Lord is one Spirit.* As the Parts of the natural Body are united by the vital Influence of the ſame Soul that is preſent in the whole; ſo we are united to Chriſt by the Holy Spirit that was given to him without meaſure, and from his Fulneſs is derived to us. 'Tis clear therefore beyond all Contradiction,

diction, that Faith is not antecedently requiſite, as the means of conveying all Graces to us from Chriſt.

2. There are two Acts of Faith: the firſt reſpects the General Offer of Pardon in the Goſpel to all repenting believing Sinners: The ſecond is the Application of the Promiſe of Pardon to the Soul. The firſt is antecedent to evangelical Repentance: The ſecond is clearly conſequent in the Order of Nature, for the Promiſe aſſures Pardon only to *the weary and heavy laden that come to Chriſt for Reſt.*

In ſhort, there is a perfect Agreement and Sympathy between Reaſon and Divine Revelation in this Doctrine, that God pardons only the repenting Sinner. The contrary Aſſertion is an Impeachment of the Rectitude of his Nature, and directly contrary to the Deſign and Tenour of the Goſpel. If a Man be juſtified as ungodly, the Evangelical Command of Repentance for the Remiſſion of Sins is uſeleſs and unprofitable. What a pernicious Influence upon Practice this Doctrine may have, is obvious to any that conſider it. I ſhall only add, if God pardons Men as ungodly, *how ſhall he judg the World?*

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'Twas propheſied by *Enoch*, *Behold the Lord comes with ten thouſand Saints to judg all that are ungodly for their ungodly Deeds, which they have ungodlily committed.* Now as St. *James* argues againſt
Jam. 3. 10. the Perverſeneſs of Men, *when from the ſame Mouth proceeds Bleſſing and Curſing; Doth a Fountain ſend forth ſweet Water and bitter?* This Inſtance is incomparably more ſtrong with reſpect to God than to Men. 'Tis more conſiſtent and conceiveable that a Fountain ſhould ſend forth freſh Water and Salt, than that the holy and righteous God, in whoſe Nature there is not the leaſt Diſcord, ſhould juſtify ſome as ungodly, and condemn others as ungodly for ever.

2. Faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the Evangelical Condition of our obtaining Pardon. This will appear by conſidering the Nature of Faith. Saving Faith is an unfeigned Perſwaſion of the Power, and Deſire of Chriſt to ſave Sinners, that induces the Soul to receive him, and rely on him, as he is offer'd in the Goſpel. We are aſſur'd of his All-ſufficiency, and of his compaſſionate Willingneſs to ſave us; *He is able to ſave to the utmoſt all that come to God by*

by him. Our Saviour declares, *whoever comes to him, he will in no wiſe caſt out.* Faith is ſeated in the whole Soul, and according to the Truth and tranſcendent Goodneſs of the Object, produces the moſt precious and ſacred Eſteem of it in the Mind, and the moſt joyful Conſent and Choice of it in the Will. Accordingly a ſincere Believer imbraces entire Chriſt as *a Prince and a Saviour*, and is as willing to be govern'd by his Scepter, as to depend upon his Sacrifice. Acceptance and Reliance are the eſſential Ingredients of juſtifying Faith. This is the Doctrine of the Everlaſting Goſpel. The Angel declared this to the Shepherds: *Behold, I bring you Tidings of great Joy, which ſhall be to all People; for to you is born this Day, in the City of* David, *a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord. This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt is come into the World to ſave Sinners, of whom I am chief.* Faith is indiſpenſably neceſſary to our obtaining Forgiveneſs. Faith is the Channel wherein the precious Iſſues of his Blood and Sufferings are conveyed to us. To make more evident how neceſſary and gracious a Condition Faith in the Redeemer is, for our

Luke 2.

1 Tim. 1.

Pardon, I will briefly conſider the Foundation of the Covenant of Life in the Goſpel. After Man had plunged himſelf into Damnation, God having decreed, that without Satisfaction there ſhould be no Remiſſion of his Sin; and the Sinner being utterly incapable of enduring ſuch a Puniſhment in degrees, as might be truly ſatisfactory, it neceſſarily followed, he muſt ſuffer a Puniſhment equivalent in Duration. To prevent this, there was no poſſible way but by admitting a Surety, who ſhould repreſent the Sinner, and in his ſtead ſuffer the Puniſhment due for Sin. A threefold Conſent was requiſite in this Tranſaction.

(1.) The Conſent of the Soveraign, whoſe Law was violated, and Majeſty deſpiſed: For as there is a natural Diſtinction between Perſons, and between the Actions of Perſons, ſo there muſt be between the Recompences of thoſe Actions: Conſequently the Sinner is obliged to ſuffer the Puniſhment in his own Perſon. From hence 'tis clear, that the Puniſhment cannot be transferr'd to another without the Allowance of the Soveraign, who is the Patron of the Rights of Juſtice.

(2.) The

(2.) The Conſent of the Surety is requiſite: for Puniſhment being an Emanation of Juſtice cannot be inflicted on an innocent Perſon, without his voluntary interpoſing to ſave the Guilty. A Surety is legally one Perſon with the Debtor: otherwiſe the Creditor cannot exact, by the Rule of Right, the Paiment from him, which is fixt by the Law upon the Perſon of the Debtor.

(3.) 'Tis as clear, that the Conſent of the Guilty is requiſite, who obtains Impunity by the vicarious Sufferings of another. For if he reſolves to bear his own Guilt, and wilfully refuſes to be freed by the interpoſing of another between him and the Puniſhment, neither the Judg nor the Surety can conſtrain him to it. Now all theſe concur in this great Tranſaction. As the Creation of Man was a Work of ſolemn Counſel, *Let us make Man*, ſo his Redemption was the Product of the Divine Counſel. I may allude to what is repreſented to us in the Viſion of the Divine Glory to the Prophet *Iſaiah*: *I heard the Lord ſaying*, Iſa. 6. *Who ſhall I ſend, and who will go for us? Then ſaid I, Here I am, ſend me.* Thus the Riſe of our Salvation was from the Father. He makes the Inquiry, who

ſhall go for us, to recover fallen Man? The Son interpoſes, *Here I am, ſend me.* The Father from his Sovereignty and Mercy appointed and accepted the Mediator and Surety for us. It was no part of the Law given in Paradiſe, that if Man ſinned, he ſhould die, or his Surety; but it was an Act of God's free Power as ſuperiour to the Law, to appoint his Son to be our Surety, and to die in our ſtead. And the Aſpect of the Law upon a Sinner being without Paſſion, it admits of Satisfaction by the Sufferings of another. 'Tis ſaid in the Goſpel, *God ſo loved the World, ſo* above all Compariſon and Comprehenſion, *that he gave and ſent his only begotten Son into the World, that the World through him might be ſaved.* The Son of God, with the freeſt Choice, did interpoſe between the righteous God and guilty Man for that end. He willingly left his Sovereign Seat in Heaven, eclips'd his Glory under a dark Cloud of Fleſh, degraded himſelf into the Form of a Servant, and ſubmitted to an ignominious and cruel Death for our Redemption. When he came into the World, he declared his full Content, with a Note of Eminency: *Sacrifice and Offering thou*

wouldſt

wouldſt not, but a Body haſt thou prepared me: Then ſaid I, Lo I come to do thy Will, O God. Upon this Conſent of the Father and the Son, the whole Fabrick of our Redemption is built. 'Tis the Reſultance from it, that the Execution of Juſtice on Chriſt is the Expiation of our Sins, and by his Sufferings the full Price is paid for our Redemption. There is a judicial Exchange of Perſons between Chriſt and Believers, their Guilt is tranſferr'd to him, and his Righteouſneſs is imputed to them. *He made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him.* 2 Cor. 5. His active and paſſive Obedience, his Doing and Dying are as truly accounted to Believers for their Acceptance and Pardon, as if they had meritoriouſly wrought out their own Salvation.

The Sinner muſt give his Conſent to be ſaved by the Death of Chriſt upon the Terms of the Goſpel. This Conſtitution is grounded upon the eternal Articles between the Father and the Son in the Covenant of Redemption. Our Saviour declares, that *God gave his Son, that whoſoever believes in him, ſhould not periſh, but have eternal Life.* Notwith-

ſtanding the full Satisfaction made for our Sins, yet without our Conſent, *i. e.* an applicative Faith, no Benefit could accrue to us. *He dwells in our Hearts by Faith:* and by that vital Band of our Union we have Communion with him in his Death, and as entire an Intereſt in all the bleſſed Benefits purchaſed by it, as if whatſoever he did and ſuffered had been for us alone. *He is a Propitiation by Faith in his Blood.* Of this full Conſent of the Sinner, there is an excellent Example in the Apoſtle: He expreſſes it with the greateſt Ardency of Affection; *I count all things but Dung*
Phil. 3. *that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not having mine own Righteouſneſs, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Chriſt.* Like as a poor inſolvent Debtor, ready to be caſt into a perpetual Priſon, longs for a Surety rich and liberal, to make Paiment for him: Thus St. *Paul* deſir'd to be found in Chriſt, as an all-ſufficient Surety, that he might obtain a Freedom from the Charge of the Law.

The Eſtabliſhment of the Goſpel, that Faith be the Condition of our Pardon, ſo that none can be juſtified without it, is from pure Grace. The Apoſtle

ſtle aſſigns this Reaſon why all Works are excluded, thoſe performed in the State of Nature, or by a Principle of Grace, from being the procuring Cauſe of our Salvation, that it is to prevent Vain-glory in Men that would reſult from it. *You are ſaved by Grace, through Faith,* Epheſ. 2. *and that not of your ſelves: it is the Gift of God.* The Pardon of Sin is a principal Part of our Salvation. He poſitively declares, that Juſtification *is therefore of Faith, that it might be by* Rom. 4. *Grace.* If Juſtification were to be obtain'd by a Condition of impoſſible Performance, it were no Favour to offer that bleſſed Benefit to us: but it being aſſur'd to a Believer that humbly and thankfully accepts of it, the Grace of God is exceedingly glorified. To make this more clear, Faith may be conſidered as a productive Grace, or a receptive: As a productive, it purifies the Heart, works by Love; and in this Conſideration we are not juſtified by it. Faith hath no Efficiency in our Juſtification, 'tis the ſole Act of God: But Faith as a receptive Grace, that embraces Chriſt with his precious Merits offer'd to us in the Promiſe, entitles us to Pardon. And in this way Divine Grace is exalted:

for he that entirely relies upon the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, abſolutely renounces his own Righteouſneſs, and aſcribes *in ſolidum* the obtaining of his Pardon to the Clemency and Favour of God, for the ſake of the Mediator.

3. That God is ready to forgive, is fully proved by many gracious Declarations in his Word, the infallible Expreſſion of his Will. *We are commanded to ſeek his Face for ever*, his Favour and Love: for the Countenance is the Chriſtal wherein the Affections appear. Now all the Commands of God aſſure us of his approving and Acceptance of our Obedience to them: it follows therefore, that 'tis very pleaſing to him, that we pray for the Pardon of our Sins, and that he will diſpenſe it, if we pray in a due manner. When he forbad the Prophet to pray for *Iſrael*, it was an Argument of decreed Ruine againſt them:

Jer. 7. 16. *Pray not for this People, for I will not hear thee.* To encourage our Hope, God is pleaſed to direct us how to addreſs our Requeſts for his Mercy: He directs *Iſrael, that had fallen by Iniquity,*

Hoſ. 14. *to take Words, and turn to the Lord, and ſay unto him, Take away all Iniquity, and receive us graciouſly; ſo will we render the Praiſe*

Praiſe of our Lips. To this is added a ſolemn renouncing of thoſe Sins that provoked him to Anger. His gracious Anſwer follows, *I will heal their Backſlidings, I will love them freely.* If a Prince draws a Petition for an humble Suppliant to himſelf, 'tis a ſtrong Indication that he will grant it. God joins Intreaties to his Commands, to induce Men to accept this Mercy. The Apoſtle declares, *Now then we are Embaſſadors for Chriſt: as tho God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead be reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. 5. Aſtoniſhing Goodneſs! how condeſcending, how compaſſionate! The Provocation began on Man's part, the Reconciliation is firſt on God's. That the King of Heaven, whoſe Indignation was incens'd by our Rebellions, and might juſtly ſend Executioners to deſtroy us, ſhould ſend Embaſſadors to offer Peace, and beſeech us to be reconciled to him, as if it were his Intereſt and not ours, is a Mercy above what we could ask or think. With Commands and Intreaties he mixes Promiſes of Pardon to encourage us to come to the Throne of Grace: *Whoever confeſſes and forſakes his Sins, ſhall find Mercy.* This Promiſe is ratified by the ſtrongeſt

ſtrongeſt Aſſurance: *If we confeſs our*
1 John 1. *Sins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanſe us from all Unrighteouſneſs.* The Pardon of a repenting Sinner is the Effect of moſt free Mercy, but 'tis diſpenſed to the Honour of God's Faithfulneſs and Juſtice, who is pleaſed to engage himſelf by his Promiſe to do it. And tho the Word of God be as ſacred and certain as his Oath, for 'tis impoſſible for him to change his Will, or to deceive us in the one as well as the other: yet to overcome the Fears, to allay the Sorrows, and ſatisfy the Deſires of repenting Sinners, he was pleaſed to annex his Oath to the Promiſe, which
Heb 6.18. is the moſt infallible Character and Note, that the Bleſſing promiſed is unchangeable.

He adds Threatnings to his Invitations, that Fear which is an active and ſtrong Paſſion, may conſtrain us to ſeek for his Mercy. Our Saviour ſaid to the Jews who did blind and harden themſelves in their Infidelity, *If ye believe not*
Joh. 8. 24. *that I am he*, the promiſed Meſſiah, *and come to me to obtain Life, ye ſhall die in your Sins.* The Threatning implies a State final and fearful, beyond all Expreſſion; for they who die in their Sins,

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ſhall die for them to Eternity. Hell is the ſad Manſion of loſt Souls, fill'd with extreme Wrath and extreme Deſpair: and where Deſpair is without Remedy, Sorrow is without Mitigation for ever. From hence we may be convinc'd, how willing God is to pardon and ſave us, in that knowing how we are intangled with pleaſant Sins, he reveals to us what will be the eternal Conſequence of Sins unrepented and unforgiven, a Puniſhment above all the Evils that are felt or fear'd here, and above all the Patience and Strength of Sinners to endure.

If Men yield themſelves to the Call of his Word without, and of his Spirit within, and humbly accept of the Terms of Mercy, 'tis very pleaſing to him. We are aſſur'd by Jeſus Chriſt who is Truth, that there is *Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repents, more than over ninety nine Perſons that need no Repentance.* God himſelf declares with a ſolemn Oath, *that he delights not in the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he ſhould turn and live.* The Holineſs and Mercy of God are two of his moſt Divine Perfections, his peculiar Glory and Delight. Now what can be more pleaſing to that moſt pure and compaſſionate

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Being, than to ſee a ſinful Creature conform'd to his Holineſs, and ſaved by his Mercy? If the internal Joy of God, wherein he is infinitely bleſſed, were capable of new Degrees, it would riſe higher in the Exerciſe of his forgiving Mercy. There is a clear Repreſentation of this in the Parable of the Prodigal: At his Return his Father received him, with a Robe and a Ring, with Muſick and a Feaſt, the ſigns of Joy in its Exaltation. But if Sinners are hardned in Obſtinacy, and notwithſtanding God is ſo willing to pardon them, are wilful to be damn'd, with what Variety of Paſſions does he expreſs his Reſentment? He incarnates himſelf in the Language of Men, to make them underſtand his Affection to them. Sometimes he expoſtulates with a tender Sympathy, *Why will ye die?* as if they were immediately falling into the bottomleſs Pit. He expreſſes Pity, mix'd with Indignation, at their choſen Folly and Ruine; *How long ye ſimple ones, will ye love Simplicity, and Fools hate Knowledg?* What Reluctancy and Regret does he expreſs againſt proceeding to exterminating Judgments? *How ſhall I give thee up*, Ephraim? *How ſhall I deliver thee,*

Hoſ. 11.8.

thee, Iſrael? *How ſhall I make thee as* Admah? *How ſhall I ſet thee as* Zeboim? *Mine Heart is turned within me, my Repentings are kindled together.* With what a melting Paſſion does the Son of God foretel the decreed Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, for rejecting their Saviour and Salvation! *When he came near he beheld the City and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes.* Like a mild Judg that pities the Man, when he condemns the Malefactor.

Thoſe who interpret ſome Expreſſions of Scripture, that *God laughs at the Calamity of the Wicked, and mocks when their Fear comes*, and is inexorable to their Prayers, in ſuch a Senſe as evacuates moſt gracious Declarations of God, to induce Sinners to repent and believe for their Salvation, they draw Darkneſs out of Light: for thoſe Threatnings are directed againſt obſtinate Rebels that fruſtrate the moſt powerful Methods of Mercy, and reject the Call of God, in the Day of his Grace; and by way of Retaliation, their Prayers are ineffectual, and rejected in the Day of his Wrath. And that he is ſo highly and Prov. 1.

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irreconcileably provoked for their deſpiſing his Mercy, is a certain Indication how highly he would have been pleaſed with their humble accepting it. Let none then by a vile and wretched Suſpicion, that God's repeated Calls to Sinners to return and live, do not ſignify his ſerious Will, detract from the Glory of his Goodneſs, and blaſpheme his unſpotted Holineſs. His excellent Greatneſs ſecures us of his Sincerity. Why ſhould the glorious Majeſty of Heaven court deſpicable Creatures to be reconciled? We are infinite Deſcents below him, and no Advantage can accrue to him from us. Temporal Princes may be ſwayed by Intereſt to ſend falſe Declarations to Rebels in Arms, to reduce them to Obedience: but what can the moſt High gain by our Submiſſion, or loſe by our Obſtinacy? Counterfeit Kindneſs proceeds either from the Hope of ſome Good, or the Fear of ſome Evil: and of both God is abſolutely uncapable. We are all obnoxious to his ſevere Juſtice: There is no occaſion that he ſhould intend by the gracious Offer of Pardon, to aggravate the Sin and Sentence of thoſe who refuſe it. Whoſoever with Heart-breaking Sorrow, and

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unfeigned Hatred of his Sins, ſeeks for Pardon by the Mediator, he ſhall find his Experience of ſparing Mercy equal to the higheſt Expreſſions of it in Scripture, and exceeding all his Thoughts.

4. It appears, that God is ready to pardon, in that he is ſo ſlow to puniſh. Tho all the Divine Attributes are equal in God, and there is an intire Agreement between them, yet there is a Difference in their external Operations. St. *John* declares, *God is Love*; that ſignifies his communicative Goodneſs, the Exerciſe whereof is more free and pleaſing to him than the Acts of revenging Juſtice. *He does not afflict willingly the Children of Men.* His Mercy in giving and forgiving flows as Water from a Fountain: Acts of Juſtice are forc'd from him (like Wine from the Grapes) by the preſſing Weight of our Sins. In the firſt Day of Judgment a Saviour was promiſed before the Curſe was threatned. Notwithſtanding ſinful Men break his Laws, and trample on them before his Face; they *reſiſt, and grieve, and quench his Spirit*: yet he delays the Execution of Judgment, that his *Long-ſuffering may lead them to Repentance.* This will appear by conſidering that God's forbearing Sinners is not, 1. For want of Diſcovery of their Sins. Humane Juſtice may ſuffer a guilty Perſon to eſcape Puniſhment for want of clear Evidence, but this Caſe is not incident to the Juſtice of Heaven. *God is Light* with reſpect to his Purity and Omniſcience. His firy Eye pierces through the thickeſt Darkneſs wherein Sins are committed, and all the Arts of Concealment uſed to cover them. He ſees Lam. 3.

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all the Sins of Men with the Eye of a Judg; *All things are naked and open before his Eyes with whom we have to do.* Therefore 'tis ſaid, *God will require what is paſt*, and will obſerve what is to come, in order to Judgment. 2. 'Tis not from a Defect of Power that the Wicked are ſpared. Great Princes are ſometimes hindred from the Exerciſe of Juſtice, when the guilty Perſon is ſupported by a prevalent Party againſt them: for the Power of a Prince is not in himſelf, but in thoſe who are his Subjects. Thus *David* was conſtrained to ſpare *Joab*, after the Murder of *Abner*, becauſe of his Intereſt in the Army; *the Sons of* Zerviah *were too hard for him*, he fear'd their rebellious Reſiſtance. But the Power of God is inherent in himſelf, and depends upon no Creatures: *O Lord, be exalted in thine own Power.* He fears none, and is to be fear'd by all. With one Stroke of Omnipotency he can deſtroy all his Enemies for ever. He can with more Eaſe ſubdue the moſt ſtubborn Rebels, than we can breathe. His Strength is equal to his Authority, both are truly infinite. 3. The Guilty are ſpared ſometimes from the vicious Partiality of Princes to their Favourites, or a wretched Neglect of Juſtice: But the high and holy King is without reſpect of Perſons: He hates Sin with a perfect Hatred, and is angry with the Wicked every day. The Scripture gives an Account why Execution is reſpited: *The Lord is not ſlack*, (as ſome Men count Slackneſs) *but is long-ſuffering to us ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance. He waits to be gracious*, and ſpares Men in order to their Salvation.

5. It

5. It appears that God is ready to forgive, in that upon the firſt Suit of humble and penitent Believers he preſently pardons them. If we conſider how long Men continue in a Courſe of voluptuous or profitable Sins, how many Repulſes to the Offers of Mercy they are guilty of, it might juſtly be expected, that God ſhould with Diſdain reject their Petitions, or not be intreated without a long Exerciſe of Repentance, and continued, ſubmiſſive, and earneſt Solicitations for his Mercy. But the King of Heaven keeps no State, the *Throne of Grace* is always open and acceſſible to humble Penitents: When their Hearts are prepar'd, his Ear is inclin'd to hear them. *David*, after his commiſſion of very foul Sins, and long continuing in a State of Impenitency, yet upon his melting in the Senſe of his Wickedneſs and Reſolution, to humble himſelf by a mournful Acknowledgment of it, he was reſtor'd to the Divine Favour. *I ſaid I would confeſs my Sins, and thou forgaveſt the Iniquity of my Sin.* Repenting *Ephraim* is an admirable Inſtance of God's relenting Bowels to Sinners: *I have ſurely heard* Ephraim *bemoaning himſelf, Thou haſt*

chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed as a Bullock unaccuſtom'd to the Yoke: Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after I was turned, I repented; and after that I was inſtructed, I ſmote upon my Thigh; I was aſhamed, yea even confounded, becauſe I did bear the Reproach of my Youth: Is Ephraim *my dear Son? is he a pleaſant Child? for ſince I ſpake againſt him, I earneſtly remember him ſtill: therefore my Bowels are troubled for him; I will ſurely have Mercy on him, ſaith the Lord.* The Prodigal upon his Reſolution to return to his Father, and debaſe himſelf as utterly unworthy of being received as a Son, *while he was in the way, his Father ſaw him at a diſtance, and ran to him, fell on his Neck and kiſs'd him,* and entirely forgave his paſt Rebellion. The Soul-wounded Publican ſaid, *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner,* and was juſtified rather than the proud Phariſee.

6. 'Tis a convincing Argument, that God is ready to forgive Sin, in that he affords Grace to Men to prepare them for his pardoning Mercy. Repentance and Faith are ſacred Plants that do not ſpring from our Earth, but have their Roots in Heaven. *God gives Repentance*

Acts 11.

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unto Life. Faith is not of our ſelves, Epheſ. 2.
'tis the Gift of God. In our corrupt State Sin is natural to Man, and hath entirely poſſeſs'd all his leading Faculties. *The carnal Mind is Enmity againſt* Rom. 8.
God, and judges according to the carnal Affections which deprave it. The Will is rebellious, and ſtrongly inclin'd to charming Luſts: Temptations are ſo numerous and delightful, that Sinners will venture to be miſerable for ever, to enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin that die in the taſting. 'Tis true, ſuch are the inviolable Inclinations of the humane Nature to Happineſs, that no Man can love undiſguiſed Death, nor chooſe Damnation for it ſelf: yet the Affection to Sin is ſo over-ruling, that they will not forſake it tho complicated with Death. The Wiſdom of God tells us, *Thoſe that hate me, love Death,* Prov. 8. 36.
i. e. conſtructively. Our Saviour compaſſionately reproves the Jews, *Ye will not come to me that ye may have Life.* John 5.
This is the Cauſe of their remaining in a State of Guilt for ever.

Now ſuch is the Mercy of God, that he gives his Spirit, to aſſiſt Men by his illuminating, preventing, reſtraining and exciting Grace, to forſake their Sins,

that they may be ſaved: and if they did faithfully improve the lower degrees of Grace, (tho they can claim nothing by right) he would from his good Pleaſure afford them more Grace: but they are ſo averſe from God, and ſtrongly bent to the preſent World, that they ſo long reſiſt the pure Motions of Grace in their Hearts, till the Gales of the Spirit expire, and revive no more; according to
Gen. 6. that terrible Threatning, *My Spirit ſhall no longer ſtrive with Man, for he is Fleſh.*

Beſides the common Grace afforded to natural Men, there is a Super-effluence of Grace beſtowed upon ſome to convert them, which infallibly obtains its end. Thoſe who are the Patrons of Free Will, methinks ſhould allow that God is Maſter of his own Will, and the free Diſpenſer of his own Grace. This ſpecial Grace works powerfully, yet conveniently, to the reaſonable Nature. There is no Charm ſo ſweet, no Conſtraint ſo ſtrong, as the Operation of it: For the Underſtanding is convinc'd by ſo clear and ſtrong a Light of our being undone for ever without God's pardoning Mercy, *that his Loving-kindneſs is better than Life*; and this is repreſented to the Will with that powerful Application,

tion, that the Will certainly chooſes it. When there is a Wavering and Indifferency of the Will to a propounded Object, 'tis either from ſome Defects in the Object, or in the Apprehenſion of it: but when the ſupreme Good is ſo repreſented, that it fills all the Capacities of the Soul, the Will as certainly embraces it, as one that is burnt up with Thirſt, and near a cool Stream ſtoops and drinks to quench it. The Holy Spirit, who knows the manner of his own Operations, expreſſes the Efficacy of them in the Reſemblances of the Creation and Reſurrection, wherein the Divine Power cannot be fruſtrate; yet 'tis ſo congruous to the Frame of Man's Nature, that the Freedom of the Will is then in its moſt noble Exerciſe: *Men are drawn to Chriſt by the Teachings of God*; not by over-ruling Violence upon their Faculties, but by Inſtruction and Perſwaſion ſutable to them.

Now from hence 'tis evident that all the Perſons in the Godhead concur in beſtowing this admirable Bleſſing, the Pardon of our Sins: they all willingly join in this undivided Work, tho with different Operations. The Father pronounces our Pardon from the Throne:

his Majeſty ſhines without Diminution or Condeſcenſion of his Perſon in forgiving us. The Son purchaſed our Pardon by the ſacred Treaſure of his Blood. The Holy Spirit qualifies us, and applies the Pardon of our Sins to us.

3. I now come to the third general Head, that God is abundant in Forgiveneſs. This God has declar'd in Words ſo full and expreſſive, as may exceedingly ſatisfy the moſt tender and fearful Spirits: *Let the Wicked forſake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my Thoughts are not your Thoughts, neither are your Ways my Ways, ſaith the Lord. For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, ſo are my Ways than your Ways, and my Thoughts than your Thoughts.* The Diſtance is ſo great between the Heavens and the Earth, that the Sun, ſo vaſt a Globe of Light, ſeems to be of a ſmall Circumference; and the Stars of the firſt Magnitude, tho many times bigger than the Earth, appear like glittering Points of Light. This Compariſon is ſo convincing, as may aſſiſt us in our Contemplation of his Mercy. The Apoſtle

ſtle ſaith, *God is rich in Mercy.* 'Tis Epheſ. 2.
not ſaid, that he is rich in Subſtance, tho the Earth be the Lord's, and the Fulneſs thereof. He is rich in his own Perfections, not in external things. 'Tis not ſaid, God is rich in Power, tho he is Almighty; nor in Juſtice, but in Mercy: This ſignifies, that of all the Divine Perfections, none do ſhine ſo radiantly as his Mercy. This reflects a Luſtre upon his other Attributes. His Goodneſs is the Foundation of his Glory. He pardon'd ten thouſand Talents to the Servant that was inſolvent, and his Treaſure is unwaſted.

I will conſider the Extent of his pardoning Mercy, and the Entireneſs of it.

1. The Extent of it, with Reſpect to the Number and Quality of the Sins that are pardoned.

1*ſt.* The Number of them. *David*, after an attentive Conſideration of the Purity and Perfection of God's Law, breaks forth in a very great Anxiety, *Who can underſtand his Errors?* Who can enumerate the many Defections from that ſtrait Rule of our Duty? *In many things we offend all.* We are obliged perpetually to obey and glorify God: yet in every Action, even in our

religious Duties, there are many Defects and Defilements that want Pardon. How many Swarms of vain and unprofitable Thoughts, of carnal, covetous, proud, envious, and revengeful Thoughts and Desires lodg in the Hearts of Men? What a Torrent of idle, sensual, vainglorious and passionate Words flow from their Lips? How many thousand sinful Actions proceed from them? When the inlightned Conscience seriously reflects upon our Sins of Omission and Commission, how astonishing is their vast Number? What a mountainous Heap appears? They reach as low as Hell, and rise as high as Heaven. It would tire the Hand of an Angel to write down the Pardons that God bestows upon one penitent Believer.

2*dly*. Divine Forgiveness extends to Sins of all kinds and degrees, habitual and actual. Tho no Sins are absolutely small, being committed against the Majesty of God, yet comparatively, with respect to their Quality and Circumstances, there is a manifest Difference between them. Some are of a weaker Tincture, some are of a deeper Die: Some slightly wound the Conscience; some waste it, and let out its vital Blood: Some

Some do as it were whiſper againſt the Sinner, ſome cry for Vengeance. Sins of Ignorance and Infirmity, Sins of ſudden Surreption, that ſteal upon us without obſerving, Sins by ſurpriſe of the Paſſions, when there is no time to deliberate, have extenuating Circumſtances: but Sins againſt Light, wherein there is more of the Nature of Sin; Sins againſt Mercies, which in the Language of the Apoſtle, are a *deſpiſing of God's Goodneſs*; Sins againſt ſolemn Vows, wherein Men break double Bands, the Law of God and their ſacred Ingagements; Sins committed habitually and preſumptuouſly, as if God were ignorant, or indifferent and unconcern'd, or impotent and without Power to puniſh Offenders: Theſe Sins derive a greater Guilt, and expoſe to a more terrible Puniſhment. Now a gracious Pardon is offer'd in the Goſpel to all Sinners, whatever the Quality and Circumſtances of their Sins be, if they apply and addreſs themſelves to the Father of Mercy through the compaſſionate Mediator, and forſake their Sins. Of this we are aſſured from the moſt ſolemn Declaration of God to *Moſes, The Lord is merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in Good-*

Goodneſs and Truth, keeping Mercy for thouſands, forgiving Iniquity, and Tranſgreſſion, and Sin. The Promiſe is comprehenſive of all ſorts of Sins, how manifold and mighty ſoever. Beſides, to encourage us to repent and believe, God promiſes Pardon for Sins of the fierceſt Provocation. *Judah* had violated the Marriage-Covenant with God by their impure Idolatries, yet he offers to receive them. *Thou haſt played the Harlot with many Lovers, yet return again to me, ſaith the Lord.* Relapſes into rebellious Sins argue a ſtrong Propenſity to them, and exceedingly aggravate their Guilt; yet God promiſes Pardon for them: *Return ye backſliding Children, and I will heal your Backſlidings.* There are eminent Inſtances of God's pardoning Mercy recorded in the Scripture. The Apoſtle having enumerated many ſorts of Sinners guilty of enormous Crimes, Idolaters, Adulterers, Abuſers of themſelves with Mankind, tells the Corinthians, *And ſuch were ſome of you, but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified in the Name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by the Spirit of our God.* There is one ſort of Sinners excepted from the general Promiſe of Mercy, thoſe

thoſe who ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. The Reaſon of the Exception is not, that the Holy Spirit is ſuperiour in Dignity to the Father and the Son, for they are all coeternal and coequal, but from his Operations, *i. e.* the revealing the Truth and Grace of God in the Goſpel. Now the obſtinate malicious contradicting the Truth of the Goſpel ſhining in the Minds of Men, and the perverſe deſpiſing the Grace of the Goſpel, is unpardonable to infinite Mercy. Thoſe who are guilty of that Sin, have tranſform'd themſelves into the Image of the Devil, and Salvation cannot ſave them. But no others are excluded from Repentance and Pardon.

2. As the Extent, ſo the Intireneſs of Pardon offer'd to Sinners declares God's abundant Mercy.

1*ſt*. The Pardon is as full as free, according to his excellent Goodneſs: The Imputation of the Fault ceaſes, and the Obligation to Puniſhment is aboliſh'd. We have clear Evidence of this from the Scripture. God aſſures thoſe who repent and reform, *Tho your Sins be as Scarlet, they ſhall be as white as Snow: tho they be red like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool.* Pardon is more than a Reprieve

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or Suſpenſion of Judgment, 'tis a perfect Freedom from it: A repenting Believer is as clear from the Charge of the Law as an innocent Angel. *There is no*
Rom. 8. *Condemnation to thoſe that are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit.* Our cleanſing from the Defilements of Sin is imperfect, therefore we muſt be always purifying our ſelves, till we attain to abſolute Purity: but our Pardon is perfect. 'Tis irrevocable; we are aſſured, that as far as the
Pſal. 103. Eaſt is from the Weſt, God removes our Tranſgreſſions from us. As ſoon thoſe diſtant Points may be united, as Guilt may be faſtned upon thoſe whom God has pardoned. The Prophet declares, that *God will ſubdue our Iniqui-*
Mich. 7. *ties, and caſt them into the Bottom of the Sea:* From whence they can never riſe. God promiſes, *I will forgive their Ini-*
Jer. 31. 34. *quities, and remember them no more.* Pardon is compleat and final. 'Tis the Miſery of the Wicked, *they are condemned already*; they live by a Reprieve and Suſpenſion of Judgment: 'tis the bleſſed Security of Believers, they *ſhall not fall under Condemnation.* There is ſuch an Inconſtancy in the Nature of Men, that they often repent and revoke the Favours

vours and Privileges they have beſtowed; they like to day, and loath to morrow the ſame Perſons: but the bleſſed God is not ſubject to Change or Contingency. His Love, his Purpoſe, his Promiſe to his People, are unalterable.

From the Senſe of God's pardoning Mercy, Conſcience is freed from thoſe juſt Terrors that are the Conſequents of Guilt. *The Blood of Chriſt purges our Conſcience from dead Works:* from the deadly Guilt of Sin that cleaves to the Conſcience. A temporal Prince may pardon a Murderer; and Conſcience with a Countenance of Deſpair may ſummon him to appear and be accountable for his bloody Crime before the High and Everlaſting Judg: but thoſe who are *juſtified by Faith, have Peace with God.* When the Original Bond is cancell'd, the Counter-part has no Force; Conſcience is ſubordinate to God, and when he juſtifies, has no Authority to condemn. When God *blots out the Iniquities of his People as a thick Cloud,* there is a clear Sky, a divine Calm and Serenity in Conſcience. It may be enquired how the compleat Pardon of Sin is conſiſtent with the temporal Evils inflicted upon the Children of God for their

Heb. 9. 14.

their Sins. The Anſwer is obvious and eaſy. Temporal Evils inflicted on the Children of God, are declarative of his holy Diſpleaſure againſt Sin, but are not for Satisfaction to vindictive Juſtice: This would be derogatory to the Love of God, and the meritorious Sufferings of our Saviour, who did not compound with God, but made full and abſolute Satisfaction for our Sins. In the 12*th* Chapter to the Hebrews, where the Apoſtle ſo divinely and accurately treats of this Argument, there is a clear Account of the Cauſe, the Nature, and the Product of the temporal Sufferings of God's Children. The Cauſe of them is the Love of their heavenly Father diſpleaſed for their Sins: *Whom the Lord loves he chaſtens, and ſcourges every Son whom he receives.* Earthly Parents in their various Fits of Folly, ſometimes *chaſten their Children only for their Pleaſure*, and ſometimes ſpare the Rod to their Ruine: but our heavenly Father is equally wiſe and compaſſionate, and uſes ſuch Diſcipline as is requiſite for their Profit, to prevent their Continuance in Sin, that would be deſtructive to them. Believers *are chaſten'd of the*
Cor. 11. *Lord, that they may not be condemned with*
the

the World. And the Wiſdom and Love of our Father and Phyſician mixes ſuch bitter Ingredients, and in that Proportion, as are requiſite for the Quality of the Diſeaſe, and the Strength of the Patient. *He corrects them in meaſure*; he will not ſuffer them *to be tempted above what they are able.* Their Afflictions are deliberate Diſpenſations. The Nature of them is ſignified in the word Chaſtiſement: The Correction of a Child is in order to his Amendment: They are medicinal, and have a main Relation and Proſpect to the future, to make us more fearful to offend God, and careful to pleaſe him. They are more lively and ſenſible Leſſons of our Duty, than the Inſtructions of the Word, and are of the ſame Order.

The Product of the Chaſtiſements of God's Children, *is the pleaſant Fruit of Righteouſneſs to them who are exerciſed thereby:* that is, the ſanctifying Graces of the Spirit, Repentance, Faith, Hope, Patience, Self-denial, Contempt of the World, Reſignation to the Divine Will, are exerciſed, illuſtrated, and increas'd in thoſe Chriſtians who with unfainting Perſeverance endure Affliction. Heb. 12.

In

In ſhort, Death that was the penal Effect of Sin, (for the firſt Man while innocent was immortal) tho continued, yet the Sting is taken away, the Quality of it is changed: The Iſſues of it are vaſtly different to the Saints and the Wicked: To the Saints 'tis the Period of their Fears and Sorrows, the final Remedy of all their Miſeries; to the Wicked 'tis the Beginning of their Woe. The Saints paſs through the Darkneſs and Corruption of the Grave into the Kingdom of Glory: the Wicked paſs to the Blackneſs of Darkneſs for ever.

2*dly*. The Intireneſs of this great Benefit is evident in that God reſtores his Love and forfeited Favour to all that are pardon'd. Princes ſometimes pardon Offenders, but never receive them into their Favour. *Abſalom* was recall'd from Baniſhment, but for two Years was not admitted to ſee the King's Face. But God does magnify and manifeſt his Love to thoſe whom he pardons. He does not diſtinguiſh them from the Angels that always obeyed him. He forgives our Sins as entirely as if they had never been committed, and is reconcil'd as if he had never been offended. We have the moſt clear Diſcovery of this in the

the Parable of the Prodigal. It might have been expected, that his Father ſhould have reproach'd him for his obſtinate deſerting his Houſe, his waſting his Portion in Lewdneſs and Luxury, and that bitter Conſtraint forced him to return: no, he dearly embraces him, and cancels all the Debt of his paſt Offences with a moſt affectionate Kiſs: and whereas the poor Penitent preſum'd only to be received as a Servant, he was reſtor'd in the moſt affectionate manner to the Dignity and Relation of a Son; and univerſal Joy was diffuſed through all the Family for his Return. If our Saviour had not made this Relation with all its endearing Circumſtances, our narrow Hearts durſt never preſume and promiſe to us ſuch compaſſionate Love of God to repenting Sinners. But whoever imitates the Prodigal in his Return, ſhall find the Reality to exceed the Repreſentation. I ſhall add ſome Examples of this Love of God to thoſe who repent. *Mary Magdalen* had been guilty of foul Sins, yet our Saviour graciouſly received the tender Expreſſions of her Grief and Love, to the Aſtoniſhment of *Simon: She waſh'd his Feet with her Tears, and wiped them with the*

Hair of her Head, and kiſſed them: and after his Reſurrection appeared firſt to her as his endeared Favourite. 'Tis recorded by the Evangeliſt, with an infinite Emphaſis of his Love, that *he firſt appear'd to* Mary Magdalen, *out of whom he had caſt ſeven Devils. Peter,* in whoſe Denial of Chriſt there was ſuch a Mixture of Infidelity, Ingratitude, and Impiety, he promiſed he would die with him or for him; yet being queſtioned not with Terror by an armed Magiſtrate, not ſurprized by a ſubtle Examiner, but at the Queſtion of a Maid renounc'd him, yet he was reſtor'd to the Honour of his Office, and the Affection of his Maſter. 'Tis very obſervable, that when he appeared to *Mary Magdalen,* he directs her to tell his Diſciples and *Peter* of his Reſurrection; he particularly mentions *Peter,* to raiſe his drooping Spirit by this new Aſſurance of his Love.

This happy Privilege belongs to all penitent Believers, for whomſoever God pardons he prefers, and adopts into his Family, and makes them Heirs of Heaven. The firſt Beam of Mercy ſhines in the Pardon of our Sins, which is an infallible Aſſurance of freeing us from

from the Puniſhment of Sin in Hell, and of our obtaining the Joys of Heaven. Our Saviour has by his meritorious and voluntary Sufferings paid our Ranſom from eternal Death, and purchaſed for us a Right to eternal Life: accordingly *whom God juſtifies he glorifies.* The formal Effect of Juſtification is the reſtoring us to the forfeited Favour of God, and from that Fountain all bleſſed Benefits flow. God declares concerning his People: *They ſhall be mine in the day that I make up my Jewels, and I will ſpare them as a Man ſpares his Son that ſerves him:* Which two Acts of the Divine Mercy are inſeparable. Mal. 3.

The APPLICATION.

The firſt Uſe ſhall be of Caution, leſt Men abuſe careleſly and contemptuouſly the Doctrine of Divine Forgiveneſs. Many ſin freely, as if they believed the Permiſſion of Sins, or preſumed up na ready Remedy, and are without Fear of Judgment to come. This is the Language of their Actions, tho not of their Tongues. There are not a worſe ſort of Sinners out of Hell. If that

which ſhould ſoften and reclaim Sinners hardens them, the Caſe is deſperate and incurable. To correct the vile Conceits Men have of obtaining an eaſy Pardon of their Sins, tho habitually committed upon that Account, let them conſider,

1. The Angels who were the firſt and brighteſt Offspring of the Creator, for one Sin were decreed and doom'd to an Excluſion from the Glory of Heaven for ever. Mercy did not ſuſpend the Sentence: Their mighty Numbers, and the Nobility of their Nature, did not incline the Judg of the World to ſpare them. They are now in the Chains of powerful Juſtice, and have perpetual Hell within them. And ſhall rebellious Men, who are but Duſt in their original Compoſition and final Reſolution, expect to eſcape Vengeance? If we ſhould ſee a hundred Noble Men executed in a Day, the Sight would ſtrike us with Terror: How much greater Reaſon is there awfully to adore the inflexible Judg, for ſuch a dreadful Execution and Example of Juſtice upon an innumerable Company of Angels?

2. To pardon Sin is an Act of greater Power than to create the World: If we conſider the Diſtance of the Terms, and the

the Difficulty of the Means, there is a wider Diſtance between a righteous God infinitely provoked by Sin, and the guilty Creature, than between a State of not being, and the actual Exiſtence of the World. One powerful Word rais'd this great World from its native nothing. But to accord the Divine Attributes between which there ſeem'd a Repugnance, and reconcile God to ſinful Men, coſt the deareſt Price. The anxious Sinner makes Inquiry, *Shall I give the Firſt-born of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?* that is too mean an Offering: no leſs than the Firſtborn of the Almighty could by the Sacrifice of himſelf make an Atonement for our Offences. Mic. 7.

3. Vengeance belongs to God as well as Forgiveneſs. *The Wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men.* It was decreed in Heaven, 'tis denounced in his Word, and ſhall be executed by his juſt Power in its Seaſon. There is a time to pardon, and a time to puniſh. God is ſtiled *the God of Patience:* in the preſent World *his Patience has its perfect Work.* But in the next World Juſtice will glorioufly appear againſt the Wick- Rom. 1.

ed who are devoted to Deſtruction. Forbearance is not Forgiveneſs. The laſt Day will cloſe the Accounts of the Judg of the World with Sinners, and a terrible Arrear will be exacted of them for all the Treaſures of his Goodneſs and Clemency waſted by them.

4. Thoſe who indulge themſelves in a Courſe of Sin upon the Preſumption of an eaſy Pardon, are the moſt unworthy and uncapable of the Divine Mercy. They ſin againſt the Nature and End of Grace: and by an immediate and direct Oppoſition to it in the proper Notion of Grace, cut off all their Pleas for it. 'Tis true, God is very merciful, and eaſy to be intreated by thoſe who ſincerely repent and reform their Lives: but he is inexorable to all thoſe who harden themſelves in their Sins by the falſe and preſumptuous Hopes of his Mercy. He declares in his Word, that *when Sin-*

Deut. 29. *ners deſpiſe the Curſe threatned againſt them, and bleſs themſelves in their Hearts, that they ſhall have Peace, tho they walk in the Imagination of their own Hearts, to add Drunkenneſs to Thirſt; the Lord will not ſpare them, but then the Anger of the Lord and his Jealouſy ſhall ſmoke againſt them, and all the Curſes written in this Book*

Book ſhall lie upon them without Mitigation or Intermiſſion. No leſs Puniſhment than eternal Damnation is equal to their Sin. They reſiſt and renounce Mercy by their abuſing it to the worſt ends, yet are confident of their Intereſt in it. What a prodigious Contradiction is there between the Hopes of preſumptuous Sinners and their Practices? They kindle his Anger every day, and inflame Anger into Wrath, and Wrath into Vengeance, and yet ſtrongly fancy they ſhall find Mercy. What a diabolical Wonder is it, as aſtoniſhing as extraordinary Miracles, but that 'tis commonly ſeen, that Men without a Promiſe, and againſt the Threatning, ſhould expect the Favour of God, that is the Portion of his Children, and continue in high and actual Rebellion? If a Spark of Reaſon or Grain of Faith were ſhining in their Breaſts, they would be reſtleſs in the Apprehenſion of his firy Diſpleaſure. The Tempter over-reaches their Minds by a double Deluſion, that they ſhall have Time and Grace to repent, and over-rules their Wills, that the moſt terrible Threatnings and Divine Diſſwaſives are not effectual to make them forſake their Sins. They are ſecure, tho

not ſafe one Hour: for 'tis in the Power of their Judg, and they have Reaſon to
Prov. 29. fear in his Purpoſe, *to deſtroy them ſuddenly, and without Remedy.* The preſumptuous Conceit of immenſe Mercy has ſo fully poſſeſs'd their Minds, that like a powerful Opiate it makes them ſleep ſecurely upon the Brink of Ruine: but Conſcience is of an immortal Nature, and tho it may be ſtupified, it cannot be extinguiſh'd. In the preſent Life ſometimes a ſharp Affliction awakens it into a furious Activity; and then preſuming Sinners that have been indulgent to their Luſts, deſpair of Pardon: for when Mercy, that is our only Advocate in his Boſom to avert Wrath for Sins againſt the other Attributes, ſhall turn our Accuſer, and ſolicite Juſtice to revenge its Diſhonour upon thoſe who have abuſed it, there remains no Shadow of Hope to refreſh their Sorrows. But ſuppoſe the Charm be not unbound, and the Self-deceiver continues his evil Courſe to the end of Life, and periſhes pleaſantly with the vain Hopes of Mercy, yet immediately after Death his Conſcience will be irreſiſtibly convinc'd of his outragious Provocations of the righteous God, and be more tormenting

ing than the hotteſt Flames of Hell.

Let us attend to the inſtructive Inference in the Text, *There is Forgiveneſs with thee that thou mayſt be feared:* that is, with a Fear of Reverence for his amiable Excellencies, for the Attractives of his pardoning Mercy; and of Caution, leſt by abuſing we ſhould make a deadly Forfeiture of it. If God ſhould appear as an irreconcileable Judg, arm'd with Terrour againſt all Offenders, the Apprehenſion would produce Hatred, and a dreadful Flight from him: it would make Men boldly wilful, and harden them in their Rebellions: for if they cannot be pardoned for their paſt Sins, and can be but damned for their Continuance in them, they will give Licence to their roving and impetuous Appetites, and commit Iniquity with Greedineſs. Now God has appointed a Way for the Pardon of Sin, wherein there is a bright and equal Diſcovery of his Greatneſs and Goodneſs, his Purity and Righteouſneſs, that his Law may be more ſacred and inviolable, more remembred and obeyed by us. He has declared in the Death of his Son, wherein the equal Extreams of Ignominy and Torment were combin'd, what an Evil

Sin

Sin is, that requir'd ſuch a mighty Expiation. We may from the Depth of his Sufferings conceive the Exceſs and Height of our Provocations: We may underſtand the deadly Guilt of Sin, that can only be waſh'd away in the Blood of Chriſt, the Fountain of Remiſſion. To turn the Grace of God into Wantonneſs, to be more looſe and ſecure in committing Sin, is to turn the Antidote into Poiſon, and defeat his bleſſed End. 'Tis a main Article of our Reconciliation, *The Lord will ſpeak Peace to his People, but let them not return to Folly.* We may conceive, that God ſpeaks to the pardon'd Sinner what our Saviour ſaid to the Man whom he miraculouſly heal'd, *Go away, ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing befal you.*

'Tis both the Duty and Diſpoſition of thoſe who have received the Pardon of their Sins, *to fear the Lord and his Goodneſs.* There is no Principle more clearly natural and ſenſible than this: Dependance includes Obſervance; the receiving Benefits obliges a Perſon to the Benefactor. Accordingly the Pſalmiſt expreſſes the Affections of the humane and the holy Nature, *What ſhall I render to the Lord for all his Benefits?* and breaks out

Pſal. 116.

out in an Extaſy of Thankfulneſs, *O Lord, truly I am thy Servant, I am thy Servant, thou haſt broken my Bands.* The repenting Believer receives Pardon from God with joyful Admiration, that faſtens his Mind in the Contemplation of his glorious Mercy: the ſerious Thought of it kindles a ſacred Fire in his Breaſt: as 'tis ſaid of *Mary Magdalen, Much was forgiven her, for ſhe loved much.* Love to God that reſults from his pardoning Love to us, is ſingular and ſupreme, and neceſſarily produces an ardent Deſire to pleaſe and glorify him, and an ingenuous grateful Fear of offending him. The Soul that has felt *the Terrors of the Lord*, as the holy and righteous Judg of the World, and afterward has been revived by the Light of his Countenance, and has taſted how good the Lord is, how is it poſſible to reſiſt ſuch dear and immenſe Obligations? How prodigious to turn the ſtrongeſt and ſweeteſt Ingagement to Reverence and Obedience, into an Encouragement to do that which is odious and offenſive in his Sight? To ſin againſt Light heightens a Sin into Rebellion, but to ſin againſt revealed Love makes it *above-meaſure ſinful.* This is ſo contrary to natural Conſcience and

ſuper-

ſuper-natural Grace, that 'tis the Leproſy of the Wicked, not the Spot of God's Children: *Do you thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh People and unwiſe?* The upbraiding reduces them to a defenceleſs Silence, and covers them in black Confuſion. When Divine Grace pardons our paſt Sins, it cures our depraved Inclinations to future Sins.

The cleareſt Diſcovery of the Heart is by Reflections on God's Mercy. The Fear of God's Juſtice is natural, the reverent Regard of his Goodneſs is a ſpiritual Affection. There is a great Difference between filial Fear of the divine Goodneſs that is ſo becoming the Breaſt of a Chriſtian, and ſo congruous to our preſent State, and ſervile Fear, that is the proper Character of one in the Bondage of Sin.

The Filial Fear of God is an ingenuous voluntary Affection, flowing from Love, and freely exercis'd, and eſteem'd the *Treaſure of the Soul.* Servile Fear, the Sequel of Guilt, is a judicial Impreſſion from the ſad Thoughts of the provoked Majeſty of Heaven; and if the Offender could diſſolve the Bands of Conſcience, he would throw it off. Filial Fear is mix'd with Joy, 'tis the Preſervative

ſervative of God's Favour to us; it makes us more circumſpect, but not leſs comfortable: it oppoſes Security, but eſtabliſhes the Aſſurance of Faith: the Fear of the Lord, and *Hope in his Mercy*, are united Graces. Servile Fear *has Torment*, 'tis an Alarm within that diſturbs the Reſt of the Sinner; 'tis a fretting Fire that ſecretly torments him in his moſt luſcious Fruitions. Filial Fear reſtrains from all Sin in the Heart and Life, becauſe it diſhonours and diſpleaſes God; it denies the carnal Appetites with Sweetneſs and Satisfaction to the Soul: it excites us to obey God with Choice and Complacency. Servile Fear induces an Abſtinence from ſome Sins, which fly in the Face of Conſcience, and which the Sinner loves, and urges to the outward Performance of Duties, which he hates. The ſlaviſh Spirit is afraid to burn, not to ſin; he is fearful to be damn'd, not to diſpleaſe God. Filial Fear is a ſerious and habitual Conſtitution of the Soul, inſeparable from it in all Times and Places, 'tis influential into the whole Life. Servile Fear is a ſudden Paſſion, and tranſient: ſometimes a ſharp Affliction, a piercing Sermon, awakens a ſecure Wretch into a Fit

Fit of Terror. Filial Fear keeps the Soul close to God, makes it solicitous, lest any Sin should intercept the Light of his Countenance, and obstruct Communion with him, which is the Paradise of a Saint: 'tis the gracious Promise of God to his Children, *I will put my Fear into their Hearts, and they shall never depart from me.* Servile Fear makes the Sinner shy of God's Presence, and as unwilling to find him, as a Saint is to lose him: He is not pleased with Solitude, lest the guilty Conscience should have time of Recollection, and should look to the Judg above: He takes no Delight in the Society of the Saints, and the Enjoyment of the Ordinances, because God is peculiarly present there; and above all things he is afraid to die, because then *the Spirit returns to God that gave it.* In short, the filial Fear of God ascends with the Soul to Heaven, and is the eternal Respect that the blessed Spirits continually pay to his adorable Perfections. Servile Fear attends the Sinner to Hell, and settles into Despair for ever.

2*dly*. The Doctrine of Divine Forgiveness affords strong Consolation to those who are wounded in Spirit in the Sense of

of their Sins. Thoſe only who feel the intolerable Burden of Guilt, will come to Chriſt to find Reſt: and only thoſe our Saviour invites and promiſes graciouſly to receive. A tender and timorous Conſcience does often impute the Guilt of Sin, when 'tis aboliſh'd; a ſeared Conſcience does not impute it, when it abounds. God has revealed his Mercy in ſo full a manner, as to anſwer all the Allegations of a repenting Sinner againſt himſelf. He objects his Unworthineſs of Pardon: but this cannot exclude him from it: for the Grace of God ſprings from within, and has no original Cauſe without it ſelf. 'Tis like celeſtial Fire that feeds it ſelf: God declares his ſovereign Pleaſure in the Exerciſe of Mercy: *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will ſhew Mercy to whom I will ſhew Mercy.* If Mercy were beſtowed only upon the worthy, none could be ſaved: *for all have ſinned and come ſhort of the Glory of God.* The humble Penitent urges againſt himſelf, that he has been a ſingular and extraordinary Offender, that none is like him in ſinning: but we are aſſured none *is like God in pardoning.* The Number of our Sins is terrifying: This ſo affected

Exod. 33.

Mic. 7.

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the Pſalmiſt, that he fainted with deſponding Fear; *My Sins are like the Hairs upon my Head, therefore my Heart fails me.* But the Multitude of God's Mercies incomparably exceed our numerous Sins. They are renewed every Moment of our Lives: Stupendous Infinity! they are over *all his Works*; and over all his Attributes. *God is Love*, and Love covers a Multitude of Sins.

The killing Aggravations of our Sins ſtrike us through: but there is not ſo much Evil in Sin as there is Goodneſs in God. Our finite Acts cannot preponderate his unlimited Eſſence. He declares,
Hoſ. 11. *I am God and not Man, therefore ye are not conſumed.* We hardly forgive a few Pence, he forgives ten thouſand Talents. He is God, infinite in Mercy, and as liberal as infinite. Delight in Sin is an aggravating Circumſtance; but *God delights in Mercy.* Continuance in Sin inflames the Guilt; but his Mercy extends to Eternity.

I ſhall add, for the Support of returning Penitents, ſome Examples of God's forgiving great Sinners recorded in Scripture. He charges the People of
Iſa. 43. 25. Iſrael, *Thou haſt made me ſerve with thy Sins, and wearied me with thine Iniquities:*

ties. It might be expected, that the next Words ſhould have been, I will revenge your diſhonouring of me according to the Glory of my Majeſty, and the Extent of my Power: but he promiſes Pardon; *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy Tranſgreſſions for my Name ſake, and will not remember thy Sins.* By the Compariſon of their Sins, he illuſtrates the Glory of his Mercy. *Lot*, guilty of Inceſt with his Daughters; *David*, of Murder and Adultery; *Manaſſeh*, a Sorcerer and Idolater, that burnt his Children alive in Sacrifice to the Devil, and fill'd *Jeruſalem* with innocent Blood; *Mary Magdalen*, out of whom ſeven Devils were caſt; *Peter*, who was ſo faint-hearted and falſe-hearted, that with Execrations he denied his Maſter; *Paul*, that was a bloody Perſecutor; are the Inſtances of the aſtoniſhing Omnipotent Mercy of God, who can as eaſily pardon the greateſt Sins as the leaſt, and makes no Difference when our Repentance is ſincere, and our Faith unfeigned: tho according to the degrees of their Guilt Conſcience ſhould be affected. How many pardon'd Sinners, Miracles of the Divine Mercy, are in Heaven happy in the Love of God, and

glorious in Holineſs, who were as deeply guilty and polluted as any that now mournfully ſeek the Favour of God? Theſe are Examples of Grace ſo excellent and ſo divine, to encourage us in our Addreſſes for Pardon. The Apoſtle *Paul* tells us, *That for this Cauſe he*
1 Tim. 1. *obtained Mercy, that in me Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew all Long-ſuffering for a Pattern to them who ſhall hereafter believe on him to everlaſting Life.* There is the ſame Motive in God; he forgives Sins for his Name ſake: The Treaſures of his Mercy are not waſted by communicating: There is the ſame Merit in Chriſt, his precious Blood ſhed upon the Croſs is pleaded in Heaven, *He ever lives to make Interceſſion for us:* and if we *obtain the ſame precious Faith*, we ſhall have the ſame Acceptance. In ſhort, let thoſe who are overwhelmed with Fear conſider, 'tis not only our Privilege, but Duty, to truſt in the Divine Mercy: We are commanded *to believe in the Mediator:* Deſpair is more diſhonourable to God than Preſumption, in that 'tis a Sin directly againſt a ſuperiour Attribute, the Exerciſe of which is his Delight and deareſt Glory.

3*dly.*

3*dly.* Let us be excited to ſeek the pardoning Mercy of God with Humility, with Fear and all poſſible Diligence, leſt we ſhould not obtain it. Our Hearts ſhould be ſet upon this with the moſt intenſe Zeal, *for 'tis our Life.* Every impenitent Sinner is under the condemning Sentence of the Law, and there is but a ſtep between him and Death: the only Hope is, that 'tis not yet ratified by the Judg, nor inflicted, but 'tis reverſible by ſuing out a Pardon in the ſuperiour Court of the Goſpel. Now 'tis aſtoniſhing, that when the Danger is ſo great and preſent, (for 'tis as morally impoſſible to be ſure of time to come, as to recal time paſt) that Men ſhould be ſo unconcerned and ſecure, and neglect the main Work for which they are ſpared by the admirable Patience of God. Time is certainly ſhort, and uncertainly continued; and when the Oil that feeds the Lamp of Life is ſpent, the next State is the Blackneſs of Darkneſs for ever to all unpardoned Sinners. Now the Scepter of Grace is extended to us, we are within the Call of pardoning Mercy; *God waits to be gracious:* but there is a ſad Aſſurance, if we do not ſue out our Pardon in the preſent

Life, the time of our Reprieve, Death is immediately attended with eternal Judgment; the Belief of which makes the Prince of Darkneſs, with the moſt ſtubborn Spirits of Hell, to tremble: yet Men continue in the Guilt of their unrepented Sins without Fear, and wretchedly deceive themſelves with a vain Preſumption that the Door of Mercy will be open when they leave the World; or bear up themſelves by the numberleſs Multitude of ſtupid Sinners, and make a reſolute Reckoning they ſhall do as well as the moſt. They are ſtudious and contriving, active and ardent about the Affairs of this low Life, and careleſs of being reconcil'd to God, a Matter of the higheſt Concernment and eternal Conſequence. Prodigious Folly, never enough lamented! though Vengeance from above is ready to fall upon them, and Hell below with its dark Horrors is open to ſwallow them up, yet they are ſtupid and fearleſs: The Remembrance of this will rack and torment them for ever; for when extreme Folly is the Cauſe of extreme Miſery, the Sufferer is the moſt cruel Enemy to himſelf.

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Let us therefore ſeek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Now God offers his Pardon to the greateſt Sinners that will humbly ſubmit to the gracious Terms propoſed in the Goſpel for our obtaining it. Beſides what has been ſaid of Faith and Repentance, I will more particularly conſider what God requires of guilty Creatures in order to their Pardon.

Firſt, The Confeſſion of our Sins is indiſpenſably required to qualify us for Pardon. The Promiſe is expreſs and full, *He that confeſſes and forſakes Sin, ſhall find Mercy.* That we may not be deceived in the Application of this Promiſe, I will briefly conſider what is preparatory to this Duty, the Properties of it, and the Connection of Pardon with it. Prov. 28. 13.

1*ſt*. The Underſtanding muſt be enlightned by the Divine Law to diſcover Sin. The Law is the Rule of our Duty, and the Obligation to obey it is immediately conveyed by Conſcience. While there is a Cloud of Darkneſs in the Mind, there will be a Silence in the Conſcience. *Paul* declares, that he *was once alive without the Law, i. e.* not underſtanding his Guilt, he preſum'd of his

Juſtification; but when *the Commandment came* in its Light to convince him of the Tranſgreſſion of it, the Apparition of Sin in the clear Glaſs of the Law ſtruck him dead. There muſt be a Diſcuſſion of Conſcience, a comparing our Actions with the Rule, to diſcover their Obliquity: for Sins unknown and unconſider'd cannot be confeſt. Some Sins are notorious, and preſent themſelves to our Knowledg and Memory: others are of a weaker Evidence, Inquiry muſt be made after them. 'Tis an unpleaſant Work to rake in the Sink of a corrupt Heart, but 'tis neceſſary.

2*ly*. The Properties of Confeſſion are,

(1.) It muſt be free and ingenuous: That which is extorted by bitter Conſtraint is of no Value and Acceptance. *Pharaoh*, an obſtinate Rebel, upon the rack, acknowledg'd *he had ſinned*. 'Tis true, the Penal Effects of Sin may be the firſt Excitation of Sinners to conſider their Ways, but the Holy Spirit by that Means ſo deeply affects them with the Evil of Sin, that they voluntarily confeſs them before the all-diſcerning Judg. *David* declares, *When I kept Silence, my Bones waxed old: I ſaid, I will confeſs my Sins, and thou forgaveſt them.* He came

came to a deliberate Reſolution, *I will confeſs them.*

(2.) Confeſſion muſt be ſincere and full, that our Sins may be more evident and odious to us. The covering of Sins is like the keeping a Serpent warm, that will ſting more fiercely. The conceal-ing Sin argues the Love of it, and is a Bar againſt Pardon. *Bleſſed is the Man unto whom the Lord imputes no Iniquity, in whoſe Spirit there is no Guile.* 'Tis not ſaid, In whoſe Spirit there is no Sin, but no Guile, no reſerved allowed Sin. The ſincere Penitent pours forth his Heart *like Water before the Lord.* Of all Liquids none are ſo clearly pour'd out of a Veſſel as Water: Wine or Oil leave a Tincture. We ſhould in Confeſſion pour out all our Sins, and leave no Tincture of Affection to them. If it be ſaid, How can we confeſs our Sins that are above our counting? 'Tis true, but we muſt reſerve none. We muſt confeſs the kinds of our Sins, againſt the firſt and ſecond Table, that were both written with God's Hand; Sins of Omiſſion and Commiſſion, and particular Sins of greater Guilt: we muſt waſh off their deceitful Colours, that they may appear in their helliſh Shape, and more

Aliter vitium, vivitque tegendo.

Pſal. 32. 2.

deeply affect us. Men are very averſe from this Duty, and apt to conceal or extenuate their Sins. The Art of concealing and Excuſes is learnt from the firſt Tranſgreſſor. When God called to *Adam, Where art thou?* tho his Dread to appear before the Divine Preſence was a tacit Confeſſion of his Fault, and his hiding himſelf diſcovered his Sin; yet he does not acknowledg his Sin, but alledges the Conſequence of it, his Shame, to be the Cauſe of his guilty Fear. *I*
Gen. 3. 10. *heard thy Voice, and was afraid, becauſe I was naked.* And to extenuate his Offence, transfers his Guilt on the Woman, and conſtructively reflects upon God as the Cauſe of it: *The Woman which thou gaveſt me, gave me of the Fruit, and I did eat.* The wicked Excuſe did infinitely aggravate his Sin. The Woman lays her Fault at the Serpent's door, *The Serpent beguiled me.* *Aaron* pretends that the People compell'd him to Idolatry: and that the golden Calf was not the Effect of Deſign and Art, but of Chance: *I*
Exod. 32. *caſt the Gold into the Fire, and there came out this Calf.* *Saul* coloured his Rebellion with the Pretence of Religion: *He*
1 Sam. 15. *kept the beſt of the Cattel for Sacrifice.*
15. In ſhort, as in Sweating, 'tis obſerved that

that a general Sweat of the Body is for its Advantage, but the Sweat of a Part only is the Symptom of a Diſeaſe: So a clear unfeigned Confeſſion is for our Profit, but a ſemi-Confeſſion is counterfeit, an Indication of Hypocriſy.

(3.) Confeſſion muſt be mix'd with Sorrow and Shame in the Remembrance of our paſt Sins.

1. A piercing deep Sorrow from ſpiritual Principles and Perſwaſives is the Ingredient of an acceptable Confeſſion. There is a natural Sorrow proceeding from the Impreſſion of afflicting Evils. Senſe is very tender and apt to reſent what is oppreſſive to it. A Sinner that has waſted his Eſtate, blaſted his Reputation, ſhortned his Life by his Exceſſes, and haſten'd his Damnation, may feel Anguiſh in his Breaſt for his Sins, the procuring Cauſes of his Puniſhment. But this Sorrow proceeds only from the Senſe of external Evils, not from the melted Heart for the intrinſick Evil of Sin: As Marble Pillars are wet, from the Moiſture of the ambient Air. 'Tis the miſerable Man, not the miſerable Sinner that mourns. This Sorrow is conſiſtent with the Love of Sin; and when the penal Evil is removed, the Sin-

Sinner returns to the Practice of it. Carnal Sorrow only reſpects a Man's ſelf as a Sufferer: 'tis in Hell, in the extreme Degrees, *there is weeping for ever.*

There is a godly Sorrow, of which the Holy Spirit is the Spring. 'Tis the Promiſe of God to his People, *I will pour forth the Spirit of Grace and Supplication upon the Inhabitants of* Jeruſalem, *and they ſhall ſee him whom they have pierced, and mourn over him, as one mourns for the Death of his Firſt-born.* The Perſwaſive of our Sorrow is anſwerable to its Principle. The ſerious Contemplation of our bleeding dying Saviour, is a ſpiritual and powerful Motive to melt us into the Tears of Repentance. How congruous is it, if the Purchaſe of our Pardon coſt our Saviour his bloody Agony, that the applying of the Pardon to us ſhould coſt us the moſt bitter Sorrow? Divine Grief is more from the Memory of the Evils we have committed againſt our heavenly Father, than from the Evils we ſuffer. Carnal Sorrow is barren and unprofitable. It may be ſaid of it, what the wiſe Preacher ſays of wild Mirth, *What doſt thou?* only that Sorrow that comes from Heaven is accepted there: One ſpiritual Tear

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is of more Value and Efficacy with God than a Torrent of natural Sorrow.

Repenting Sorrow is an indiſpenſable Qualification in order to our Pardon, not merely from the Will of the Law-giver as the Reaſon of our Duty, but from the Congruity of the thing it ſelf. 'Tis obſervable, that 'tis the Wiſdom and Kindneſs of the God of Nature, that the Food that preſerves Life is pleaſant to our Taſte, to invite us every Day to eat, and renew our Strength; but Phyſick that is neceſſary for the Recovery of Health, is very diſtaſtful, that our Averſion from it may make us circumſpect, to prevent all Exceſſes that are the Cauſes of Diſeaſes. Thus the ſorrowful Confeſſion of Sin which is medicinal to the Soul, is very afflicting; it wounds the Spirit, and breaks the Heart, that we may be jealous of our ſelves, leſt we eat of the forbidden Fruit that requires ſo bitter a Remedy.

Godly Sorrow, tho it be very afflicting to Nature, yet the Exerciſe of it is more ſatisfying to a ſincere Penitent, than all the Pleaſures of Sin. In two caſes Grief is pleaſant: when 'tis upon the account of a Perſon dearly loved; a Parent indulges his Sorrow for the Death of

of a Child that was the Life of his Life. Or when Pain is beneficial and an Advantage: as in the Application of a Plaiſter, we are pleaſed with the Pain it cauſes, that being a Sign and Effect of its healing Operation. Now both theſe Conſiderations are mix'd with repenting Sorrow: for it principally ariſes from the Reflection upon Sin, as that which has ſo diſhonour'd and diſpleaſed the bleſſed God our Maker, Preſerver and Redeemer; that we have preferr'd the pleaſing our corrupt and licentious Appetites, before the obeying *his holy, juſt, and good Will.* The repenting Sinner declares his Love to God by his Grief for offending him, and voluntarily remembers his paſt Sins, and is pleaſed in overflowing Sorrow for them. And this Sorrow is preparative for Peace: *Unutterable Groans* are introductive of *unſpeakable Joys:* the Holy Spirit *that convinces of Sin is the bleſſed Comforter.*

2. The Confeſſion of Sin muſt be mix'd with Shame. All the juſt Cauſes of Shame, Guilt, Turpitude, Folly and Diſappointment, are complicated in Sin. The repenting Sinner, by Conſciouſneſs and Reflection upon Sin, that induces ſo heavy a Guilt, that defiles the Soul with

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ſo deep a Pollution, that no Ray of its Original Purity remains, that debaſes it infinitely below its heavenly Deſcent, mourns with Tears of Confuſion for what he has done. Repenting *Ephraim* bemoans himſelf, that he had been rebellious againſt the Methods of God's Mercy, like a refractory Bullock unaccuſtom'd to the Yoke: and his recoiling Thoughts made him to ſmite on his Thigh, to be aſhamed to the degree of Confuſion for his Diſobedience. How affecting an Object he was in God's Eye, the immediate Anſwer declares: *Is* Ephraim *my dear Son? is he a pleaſant Child? for ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill: therefore my Bowels are troubled for him; I will ſurely have Mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord.* Jer. 31. The Pſalmiſt reflecting upon his being almoſt vanquiſh'd by a vexatious Temptation, degrades and vilifies himſelf, *ſo fooliſh was I and ignorant, and like a Beaſt before thee.* Pſal. 73. *Ezra* in the Confeſſion of the Holy Seed's mixing with Heathen Idolaters, ſaith, *O Lord, I bluſh and am aſhamed at the foul Deformity of their Sin.* The Apoſtle upbraids the Romans with a ſtinging Reproach, *What Fruit have you of thoſe things whereof ye are now aſhamed,*

med, the End whereof is Death? When a fooliſh Choice is made, and the Folly is detected, and Experience diſappoints the Expectation, the natural Conſequent is Shame. At the laſt Day, when the Filthineſs and Folly of Men ſhall be publiſh'd before God, and all the Angels and Saints, how much rather would they be hid in the Darkneſs of their Graves, than be clothed with Confuſion before that glorious and immenſe Theatre? The ſorrowful Confeſſion of Sin, with deep Shame here, will prevent the expoſing the Sinner to publick Shame hereafter.

(4.) Confeſſion muſt have Concomitant with it, the judging our ſelves as unworthy of the leaſt Mercy, and deſerving ſevere Puniſhment. The Apoſtle aſſures us, *If we would judg our ſelves, we ſhould not be judged.* He does not ſay, if we are innocent we ſhall not be condemn'd, for then who can appear before the high and inlightned Tribunal of Heaven? but if we acknowledg our Guilt, and the Righteouſneſs of the Sentence to which we are obnoxious, we ſhall be ſpared. We cannot ſatisfy God's Juſtice, but we muſt glorify it: In this the admirable Mercy of God appears:

pears. Suppoſe a Court on Earth, wherein the Rule of Judgment were, that all the Faults which the Guilty confeſs and condemn themſelves for, ſhould be pardoned, and only thoſe they conceal ſhould be deadly to them; how willingly and humbly would thoſe who are conſcious of many capital Crimes, and are ſummon'd to appear, accuſe themſelves? In the Court of Heaven, if we are faithful to God and our own Souls, in the confeſſing our Sins, and paſſing Sentence upon our ſelves, we prevent his Sentence againſt us.

(5.) Prayer for Pardon muſt be joined with the Confeſſion of Sin: *The Lord is good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in Mercy unto all that call upon him.* God who is rich in Mercy, has appointed Prayer as the Means of our receiving it; it being moſt honourable to him, that we ſhould have a ſerious Senſe of our Wants and Unworthineſs, and our abſolute Diſability to ſupply them: and by our Deſires we ſhould glorify his Power and Love, whereby he is all-ſufficient and ready to beſtow upon us his Bleſſings. Prayer for Pardon muſt have theſe Ingredients. 1*ſt.* Humility is the moſt becoming Qualification of a Sup-

Suppliant to the high Judg of the World, to reverſe the Sentence of eternal Death. The deep Apprehenſion of our Guilt will humble us before his dreadful Tribunal. *2dly.* Fervency, which is the Life of Prayer. A cold Prayer, the ſpiritleſs Motion of the Lips, is ſo far from inclining the Divine Mercy to pardon us, that it increaſes our Guilt, and provokes God's Diſpleaſure. If our Apprehenſions were as real and quick of our ſpiritual Wants as of our temporal, our Prayers would be as ardent for Supplies. Our Deſires ſhould be raiſed in the moſt intenſe degrees, in ſome proportion to the Value of the Bleſſing; they ſhould be ſtrong, as our Neceſſity to obtain it. The Pardon of our Sins is the Effect of God's higheſt Favour, of that Love that is peculiar to his Children, 'tis the Fruit of our Saviour's bloody Sufferings; without it we are miſerable for ever, and can we expect to obtain it by a formal ſuperficial Prayer? It deſerves the Flower and Zeal of our Affections. How ſolicitous and vehement, and unſatisfied ſhould we be, till we have the clear Teſtimony that we are in a State of Divine Favour? Only fervent Prayers are regarded

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by God, and recorded in Heaven. We diſvalue his Pardon by our Indifferency and faint Deſires. In our Petitions for temporal things, our Affections ſhould be temperate, always mix'd with reſign'd Submiſſion to the Will and * Wiſdom of our Heavenly Father, who knows what is better for us than we do, and loves us better than we do our ſelves: but in praying for the Pardon of our Sins our Affections ſhould be inflamed, we ſhould as it were offer Violence to the King of Heaven, and be unſatisfied without it.

* Nam pro jucundis apriſſimæ, quæq; dabunt Dii: charior eſt illis homo quam ſibi. *Juven.*

What ardent and repeated Addreſſes were made by *David* for this great Bleſſing: *Have Mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy Loving-kindneſs, according to the Multitude of thy tender Mercies blot out my Tranſgreſſion. Waſh me throughly from mine Iniquity, and cleanſe me from my Sin. Purge me with Hyſſop, and I ſhall be clean: waſh me, and I ſhall be whiter than Snow. Deliver me from Blood-guiltineſs, O God, thou God of my Salvation.* He prays as if the Ghoſt of *Uriah* were always in his View, covered with Blood, and reproaching him for his treacherous Cruelty. The Affairs and Pleaſures of his Kingdom could not

divert and calm his Spirit, till he was reſtored to the joyful Senſe of God's ſaving Mercy. If it be ſaid, that *David*'s complicated Sins were of a crimſon Guilt, and juſtly terrified his Conſcience with the Apprehenſion of Vengeance: I anſwer, 'tis true, but ſuppoſing that preventing Grace has kept us from Sins of a high Nature, whereby we ſhould have incurr'd greater Guilt, and been expoſed to greater Puniſhment, yet even the beſt Men are in infinite need of pardoning Grace; for the leaſt Sin makes us guilty of eternal Death, and the infinite Number of our Sins, tho according to the carnal Conceits of Men ſmall, would be overwhelming. What is weaker than a Drop of Water, yet the Sea that is a Collection of innumerable Drops of Water, does often by an irreſiſtible Inundation drown the Land. The Wind is a Collection of many Vapours, which ſingly are of no Force, yet it often tears up the ſtrongeſt Trees, and overthrows the firmeſt Buildings. If the numerous Sins of one Man's Life were ſet in order before his Eyes, he would ſink into the Depths of Deſpair, were not the Divine Mercy ſuperabundant to our abounding

bounding Sins. We muſt renew our Requeſts for Pardon every day: 'tis more neceſſary than to pray for our daily Bread. We contract new Guilt every day: and as our Saviour tells us, *he that is waſhed needs to waſh his Feet*, i.e. the Sins of Frailty and daily Incurſion muſt be purged away by ſerious Repentance, and the Application of the Blood of Chriſt, and our earneſt Prayer for Pardon. 'Tis the cruel Character of Satan, he accuſes the *Saints before God Day and Night:* He is an ardent Accuſer, and watchful always to find Matter to provoke God's Diſpleaſure againſt us. 'Tis therefore a Duty of daily Revolution, to pray for our Pardon. Beſides, the Neglect of ſeeking for the daily Pardon of our Offences againſt God, argues the deſpiſing his Anger, and conſequently the deſpiſing his Love, which is infinitely provoking. We are commanded not to let the *Sun go down upon our Wrath, much leſs upon God's.* Repentance is not an initial Act of Sorrow, but muſt be renewed all our Lives. God's pardoning us is not a tranſient Act, but continued, as Conſervation is a continued Creation.

Prayer for Pardon muſt be mix'd with Faith in our *bleſſed Advocate, who ever lives to make Interceſſion for us.* If we could fill the Air with our Sighs, and Heaven with our Tears, we could not incline the righteous and holy God to pardon us: his Juſtice is inflexible, and his pardoning Mercy a ſealed Fountain; 'tis by the precious Merits and Mediation of his Son we are reconciled to him. Jeſus Chriſt is the ſame powerful compaſſionate Saviour, *yeſterday, to day, and for ever.* His obedient Sufferings are of infinite Value, and everlaſting Efficacy.

Laſtly, Confeſſion of Sin is a relative Duty, and muſt be joined with forſaking of Sin. The ſharpeſt Sorrow, the moſt confounding Shame for Sin, the ſtrongeſt Deſires for Mercy, without the forſaking of Sin, are ineffectual. There muſt be a renouncing of Sin in our Hearts, a Reſolution firm and permanent againſt it, an avoiding the Appearance and Approaches of Sin, and an actual leaving it. If it be ſaid, 'tis impoſſible we ſhould preſerve our ſelves from all Sin: St. *John* tells us, *If any Man ſaith he has no Sin, he is a Liar, there is no Truth in him.* I anſwer, we muſt

muſt diſtinguiſh between Sins: there are ſome, which while we are united to Fleſh, that is a Principle of Weakneſs, and are in this open State, ſurrounded with Temptations, we cannot abſolutely be freed from. Such are Sins of Ignorance and Inadvertence, and of ſudden Surreption: for Grace is not beſtowed in ſuch a degree of Eminence to the Saints here, whereby they may obtain a clear and final Victory over them: but if we pray, and watch, and ſtrive againſt them, and mourn for their Adherence to us, *God will ſpare us as a Father ſpares his Son that ſerves him.* And 'tis a certain Sign of our Sincerity, if we are gradually cleanſing our ſelves from them. If they grow and increaſe, 'tis a ſad Indication: as 'tis ſaid, if a Scald in the Head ſpreads, 'tis a Leproſy. Lev. 5. 13. But there are Sins of a more heinous Nature, the not forſaking whereof excludes from Heaven: ſuch are enumerated by the Apoſtle, *The Works of the Fleſh are* Gal. 5. *manifeſt, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Hereſies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like: of the which I have told you in*

time paſt, that they which do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Beſides, if the Love of any Sin remains in the Heart of a Man, he cannot be juſtified here, nor glorified hereafter. An indulged Sin, tho ſmall in the Matter, is great in the Diſpoſition of the Sinner. In ſhort, God requires ſincere Repentance, expreſs'd in the confeſſing of our Sins, not to inform him, for neither the Solitude or Secrecy wherein Sin is committed, can hide us from his all-diſcerning Eye: tho there is no Witneſs to accuſe and give Evidence, nay if the Sinner could extinguiſh his Conſcience, yet God will ſet the Sins of Men in order before them, and convince the Guilty, he needed not their Confeſſion to diſcover them: but the humble ingenuous and ſorrowful Confeſſion of Sin is required, that his Mercy may be more illuſtrious in the Pardon of our Sins, and that the Sinner may fear to return to Folly. And this Confeſſion muſt be attended with the forſaking of Sins, in order to our Pardon, becauſe of his immutable Perfections. A Malefactor may juſtly be condemned for his Crimes, and tho he remains impenitent and obſtinate in Evil, may be pardoned, becauſe

a temporal Prince is capable of various Apprehenſions and Paſſions, and may deflect from the Rule of Juſtice: but the Judg of the World is unchangably righteous and holy, and cannot pardon Sinners to the Diſparagement of his Majeſty, his Purity and Juſtice.

2. Our pardoning the Offences of others is an evangelical Condition of our obtaining Pardon: We are commanded, *When ye ſtand praying, forgive if ye have ought againſt any: that your Father alſo which is in Heaven may forgive you your Treſpaſſes. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your Treſpaſſes.* The Command is peremptory and univerſal, frequently and ſeverely urged upon us by our Saviour. The Reaſonableneſs and Congruity of it is moſt evident, if we conſider the Diſparity of the Obiect, or the Number of Offences. Our Sins againſt God are relatively infinite, for his Majeſty and Authority are truly infinite, which are deſpiſed and abuſed by the Tranſgreſſion of his Laws: they are againſt all the Duty and Motives of Juſtice and Gratitude that oblige reaſonable Creatures to obey their Maker. Now the Offences and Injuries done to Mark 11. 25, 26.

us are incomparably leſs: for we are mean Creatures, far leſs in compariſon to God, than a Worm is to an Angel; and by our Sins are *viler than the Earth.* Beſides, the Obligation that ſhould reſtrain Men from being injurious to us, are of infinitely a lower Nature. The Diſparity in the Number is very conſiderable. Our Sins againſt God are like the Sand upon the Sea-ſhore, their Number is aſtoniſhing: Our Imaginations have been continually evil, from the dawning of our Reaſon: but Offences againſt us are comparatively few: for the Variety of Objects in the World often divert the Thoughts and Paſſions of our Enemies from us. We owe to the Lord 10000 Talents, a vaſt Sum that can never be paid if it be not forgiven, and ſhall we be unwilling to forgive a few Pence? What is more becoming than that we who want a great Pardon, ſhould give a little one? The Divine Mercy is propoſed as a Model for our Imitation. We muſt pardon intirely, and take no Revenge for Injuries done to us, but return Love for Hatred, Good for Evil, for ſo God does to us. We muſt not only forgive, but forget Injuries in the Senſe of Love: not like

like thoſe who pardon in Words, but retain the Memory of Offences, and upon a ſlight Occaſion renew their Reſentments. We muſt forgive great Offences as well as ſmall, and renew our Pardon as often as Offences are repeated, unleſs we will ſet Bounds to the Divine Mercy. We muſt rejoice more in pardoning than in revenging Injuries, and ſeek to be reconciled to thoſe who are averſe from us, for that is according to our Pattern. 'Tis pretended, that by bearing a ſingle Injury, we expoſe our ſelves to a double Injury: but we muſt imitate our heavenly Father: If we do not follow him in forgiving, he will follow us in retaining our Sins. The Pſalmiſt tells us, *With the Merciful God will ſhew himſelf merciful, but with the Froward he will ſhew himſelf froward:* A holy and righteous Puniſhment in Retaliation of their ſinful Diſpoſition.

The pardoning Injuries is contrary to corrupt Nature, and the Duty is difficult, but the Reward is infinite. Tho it ſeems to vilify us, as if defective in our Minds, not to underſtand Injuries, or in Courage not to repay them, which makes Men hard to forgive; yet upon calm Conſideration we ſhall eſteem it a

Duty

Duty eaſy and honourable: for it prevents the inflaming our Paſſions, and the troubling of our ſelves and others: 'tis an Act of Royalty, and makes us ſuperiour to them: 'tis the nobleſt Victory, and often conquers and changes an Enemy into a Friend. And above all Motives this ſhould recommend it to us, it ſeals our Pardon from God, and conveys the moſt clear and comfortable Senſe of it to us: For, as the Pſalmiſt excellently argues, *He that planted the Ear, ſhall he not hear: He that formed the Eye, ſhall he not ſee?* If we are by Divine Grace inclin'd and enabled to pardon frequent Offences againſt us, ſhall not the God of all Grace be ready to pardon our many Offences againſt him? Our Saviour reaſons from the Love of natural Parents; *If you that are evil know how to give good things to your Children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to thoſe that ask it?* The Illation is as ſtrong in forgiving Love. If we who are of an unforgiving Nature ſincerely forgive thoſe who injure us, and reſtore them to our Favour, how much more ſhall God who is Love, forgive our Sins, and be reconciled to us?

4. The

4. The Divine Forgiveneſs ſhould be a powerful Motive to Thankfulneſs. *David* addreſſes to his Soul in an ardent and lively manner; *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bleſs his Holy Name.* Pſal. 103. 1, 2. He excites every Faculty, the Underſtanding to conſider and value the Mercies of God, the Memory to regiſter them, and retain a thankful Senſe of them, the Affections to celebrate them. He repeats the Call, *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits.* We are apt to forget Favours, and remember Provocations. Benefits are written in the Duſt, Injuries are engraven in Marble. But ſtrong Affections will make indelible Impreſſions of Thankfulneſs. If we duly conſider the Greatneſs and Goodneſs of God, and our Meanneſs and Unworthineſs, *that we are leſs than the leaſt of his Mercies,* we muſt be convinc'd every Beneſit we receive from God deſerves to be remembred and acknowleged with ſerious Thankfulneſs. That God draws a Curtain of Reſt about us in the Night, provides for us in the Day, regards us with a compaſſionate Eye, and relieves us in our Wants and Sorrows, ſhould cauſe ſuch deep

deep Affections as flow into outward Declarations of Praiſe.

'Tis true, our moſt ſolemn Recognition of his Benefits is but a poor Duty compar'd with his immenſe Bounty to us: our Thankſgiving is an Echo to God's Mercies, that repeats a few Syllables: what can our fading Breath add to his Bleſſedneſs and Glory, that are in the higheſt degree of Perfection, and truly infinite? But 'tis moſt reaſonable, that as all our Bleſſings flow from his Mercy, they ſhould fall into the Sea of his Glory: and when our Souls bleſs him, he accepts our Sincerity, and does not deſpiſe our Thankſgivings for want of Perfection.

In the recounting God's Benefits, the Pſalmiſt mentions in the firſt place the Pardon of Sin, *who forgives all thy Iniquities*, as the Principal and Foundation of all the reſt. This in a moſt powerful way enter'd into his Heart, and kindled a ſacred Fire there. I will briefly ſhew, that the Pardon of Sin is ſo divine a Benefit, that it deſerves our moſt ſolemn Thankfulneſs, and that it inclines and diſpoſes the Soul to that Duty.

1*ſt*. That the Pardon of our Sins deſerves our moſt ſolemn Thankfulneſs, will

will appear by an evident Light, if we conſider the Nature and Quality of the Benefit, the Means by which 'tis obtain'd, the Circumſtances in the diſpenſing it, and the Conſequents.

(1.) The Quality and the Nature of the Benefit. Our Bleſſedneſs conſiſts in the Forgiveneſs of our Sins. *David* inſpired from Heaven declares, *Bleſſed is the Man whoſe Iniquity is forgiven, and whoſe Sin is cover'd.* Pſal. 32. 1. The worſt Effect of Sin is the Separation between God and the Soul. In his Preſence *is Fulneſs of Joy*, in his Abſence Fulneſs of Sorrow. *Go ye curſed*, is as terrible a Part of the Sentence as the *everlaſting Burning*. Hell is the Element of Sin and Miſery: wherein the Fire made fierce with Brimſtone, and the undying Worm of Conſcience, torment the Wicked. Now the Pardon of Sin ſecures us from the Wrath of God, the ſupreme Evil, and the Cauſe of all other Evils.

Beſides, the Love of God that pardons us is our ſovereign Good, and is the productive and conſervative Cauſe of all Good: It beſtows upon us celeſtial Happineſs, in compariſon of which all the Degrees of worldly Honour, and Power, and Pleaſure, and Riches, are but

but Droſs and Dung. The Pardon of Sin has inſeparably annex'd to it the Privilege of Adoption, and a Title to the Kingdom of Glory. Our Saviour declar'd to the Apoſtle, that the End of the Goſpel is *to open the Eyes of Men, and*
Acts 26.18 *to turn them from Darkneſs to Light, that they may receive the Forgiveneſs of Sins, and an Inheritance among them who are ſanctified by Faith that is in me.*

God permitted the Fall of Man, to raiſe him to a more excellent and ſtable Felicity. *Adam* was dignified with Dominion over the lower World, and ſeated a Prince in Paradiſe; but his Happineſs depended upon his Obedience, and that upon the Freedom of his Will, which proved a dangerous Endowment by his Abuſe of it. He was fooliſh and fickle in the beſt State of Nature: he affected an independent Immortality, *and being in Honour, became like the Beaſts that periſh.* But the Pardon of Sin is the Foundation of eternal Happineſs. Thoſe *who are juſtified ſhall be glorified, and made equal to the Angels,* who are conſtant in Good, as the Devils are obſtinate in Evil. The bleſſed State above is ſecure and unforfeitable: the Saints are uncapable of ſinning and dying.

(2.) The

(2.) The Means whereby our Pardon is obtain'd. I ſhall not dare to determine, that God could not have pardon'd us by his Sovereignty without Satisfaction to his Juſtice, but he has been pleaſed to ſave us in a way moſt honourable to himſelf, and comfortable to us. The Pſalmiſt tells us, according *to the Name of God, ſo is his Praiſe.* As his excellent Attributes are manifeſt in his Works, underſtanding Creatures adore and celebrate them. The Wiſdom of God ſo gloriouſly appears in the way of our Salvation, that the admiring Angels praiſe him for ever. And the Goodneſs of God is ſo conſpicuous in ſaving us by Chriſt, that our exuberant Affections ſhould be poured forth in Thankfulneſs. The Remiſſion of our Sins is *by Redemption in his Blood.* It was an Expreſſion of *David*'s Piety, that he would not ſerve God with *that which coſt him nothing*, but purchaſe the Sacrifice by a Price: and it was the high Expreſſion of God's Love, that he would not ſave us with that which coſt him nothing, but with the ſacred Treaſure of Heaven, the precious Blood of his Son. Beſides, the guilty Conſcience has ſo quick a Senſe of God's revenging Juſtice, that our

Pſal. 48.

2 Sam. 24. 24.

our Aſſurance would not be ſo entire in his Mercy, without Satisfaction made by the Sufferings of our bleſſed Mediator. In this we have the Advantage of *David*, who had not ſo clear a Diſcovery of the Means of our Pardon, but a general Knowledg of the Forgiveneſs of Sins; yet that inſpir'd ſuch flaming Affections into his Breaſt, that he begins the Euchariſtical Pſalm for that Mercy, and concludes it with *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul:* But we that *have had Jeſus Chriſt evidently ſet forth as crucified before our Eyes, to reconcile God to us*; we to whom it is revealed, that *the Robe of our Salvation* is woven out of his bleeding Bowels, in the ſame Proportion as our Knowledg of this myſterious Mercy, our Thankfulneſs ſhould exceed his. If any do not with the moſt ardent Affections acknowledg the Mercy of Forgiveneſs ſo dearly purchaſed, 'tis an unhappy Sign he has no Intereſt in it.

(3.) The Circumſtances of diſpenſing our Pardon. I ſhall conſider two that make the Divine Mercy more glorious and worthy of our Thankfulneſs.

1*ſt*. That pardoning Mercy was diſpenſed to us, notwithſtanding our continued Rebellions againſt God. A Prince

is

is ſometimes induced to pardon a Criminal, by the Solicitations of his Friends, and by his Prayers and Tears: but the Divine Goodneſs was the ſole Mover for us, and interpoſed between Juſtice and our Offences. Inſtead of appeaſing God by humble and mournful Submiſſion, and ardent Addreſſes for Mercy, we repeated the Provocations of his Diſpleaſure every day. How long did he with unwearied Patience *wait to be gracious?* If after ten thouſand Denials of accepting his Mercy, he had forſaken us, we had been as miſerable as we are ſinful. But notwithſtanding our being inflexible to the innumerable Calls of his Word, impenetrable to the pure Motion of his Spirit, and inſenſible of his excellent Goodneſs that leads Sinners to Repentance; tho the Love of Heaven or Fear of Hell could not prevail with us to forſake our Sins: when we were prepared for Wrath, and averſe and utterly indiſpoſed for the receiving his Mercy, then his Grace, as free as omnipotent, gave us Repentance unto Life, and qualified us for Pardon, and beſtowed it upon us. The Extenuation of our Sins is inconſiſtent with the Exaltation of Grace: but the more humble we are

in the deep Senſe of our Guilt, the more thankful for the Divine Clemency. That God was pleaſed to *crown us with Loving-kindneſs and Mercy*, when a killing Charge of innumerable Offences was levell'd againſt us, O Goodneſs, truly Divine and Infinite, and ſhould accordingly affect us with Admiration!

2*dly*. Pardoning Mercy diſtinguiſhes between Sinners of equal Guilt, and often ſaves thoſe of greater Guilt when others die eternally: This Comparative heightens God's Love and our Thankfulneſs. How many are ſurpriz'd and cut off in a Courſe of Sin? how many die without Repentance, and are under a notorious Neceſſity of periſhing? yet we that were as bad or worſe, neither melted and made pliable by his Goodneſs, nor better'd by his Judgments, he ſpared, and by his Grace cleanſed and changed us, that we might partake of Mercy. In this Diſpenſation the Queſtion of the Apoſtle may be put in its full Force, *Who made thee to differ?* Nothing within us, nothing without us, diſtinguiſh'd us from thoſe that periſh; there were the ſame polluted Principles in our Hearts, and the ſame rebellious Sins in our Lives: only the Mercy of God

God that has no moving Cauſe but it ſelf, made the Difference. Let the Compariſon be contracted between us and our Aſſociates in Sin, and as the Sunbeams concenter'd in a Burning-glaſs, it will more inflame our thankful Affections. How many that were joined in the commiſſion of ſocial Sins, of Intemperance, Uncleanneſs, Unrighteouſneſs, and the like, are dead, and without the Reſerve of pardoning Mercy, and ſome were reſcued from Damnation, as due to them as to the reſt. At the laſt Day when there ſhall be an everlaſting Separation between thoſe at the right Hand, and thoſe at the left Hand of the Judg of the World, we ſhall underſtand the Riches of Grace that diſtinguiſh between us and the Partners of our Guilt: as by ſeeing us juſtified and received into Glory, their ſad Excluſion will be aggravated to Extremity; ſo by ſeeing them doom'd to Deſtruction for ever, the ſaving-Grace of God to us will be more glorious.

(4.) The Conſequents of Pardon in the preſent Life deſerve our moſt affectionate Thankfulneſs.

1. The Pardon of Sins gives us a regular Title to all temporal Bleſſings,

and the trueſt Sweetneſs in their Fruition. God is the univerſal and abſolute Proprietary of all things in this World, being made by his creating Power, and continued by his preſervative Power. By our rebellious Sins we were under a juſt Deprivation of them. Now the Pardon of Sin takes off the deadly Forfeiture, and reſtores the Uſe and Benefit of temporal Bleſſings to us. 'Tis true, God by his general Bounty affords Supplies to his Enemies; *The Sun riſes with his chearful Light, and the Rain falls upon the Juſt and Unjuſt*; and wicked Men have a civil right to their Poſſeſſions: but they are not the Gifts of his ſpecial Love to them. The Prodigal was firſt pardon'd, and then entertain'd with a Feaſt. The Love of God gives a chearful Tincture to all his Benefits. 'Tis emphatically ſaid, *God, even our own God, ſhall bleſs us.* As he is pleaſed to value and accept the meaneſt Service that is mix'd with our Affections to him: A Cup of cold Water that comes from the Spring of Love, ſhall have its Reward: So his Love raiſes the Price of every Bleſſing. The Pſalmiſt having ſet forth the Riches, and Proſperity, and Peace of a Kingdom, breaks forth,

Happy

Happy is the People that are in ſuch a caſe. But he preſently revokes it, and aſcends with a Gradation of Light and Force; *Yea, happy is that People whoſe God is the Lord*; who are in a State of Divine Favour. Temporal Bleſſings, if they are not the Gifts of God reconciled to us in the Redeemer, are Snares that alienate the Hearts of Men from God, and foment their Luſts, and prepare them for final Deſtruction. The rich Man had his good things here; and was tormented after his ſenſual Fruitions. A rebellious Sinner is ſpared for a time, and puniſhed for ever. The King of *Sodom* was reſcued from Captivity by *Abraham*, and reſerved for Deſtruction by a Shower of Fire and Brimſtone.

2. The Pardon of our Sins allays and mitigates all Afflictions in the preſent State. The Conſcience of Guilt mix'd with Affliction, is like the poiſoning a Sword that makes it wound more deadly. The Spirit of a Man may bear temporal Evils; that is, by Counſel and Conſtancy may ſupport himſelf under them; *but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Conſcience in Anguiſh by the feeling of God's Wrath for our Sins, and Fear of the Extremity of it hereafter, is an into-

lerable Evil. Let the Affliction be a light Touch upon the outward Man, yet when the afflicted Perſon conſiders, that 'tis ſent from God as an Enemy, and 'tis the Beginning of his Wrath that is a conſuming Fire, he is diſpirited and ſinks under the Weight of it. How can frail Man encounter with offended Omnipotence, ſinful Man conflict immediately with the Holy God? The Senſe of Guilt makes a Man a Terror to himſelf, and conſequently makes Afflictions to be more piercing and dolorous. Whereas when the Soul is eſtabliſh'd in the Peace of God, it finds Conſolation in his pardoning Love, ſuperiour to all kinds and degrees of external Evils that can afflict us here. 'Tis the happy Privilege of the Inhabitants of *Zion*, the holy City, *They ſhall not ſay they are ſick, for their Iniquities ſhall be forgiven.* The Divine Comforter fortifies their Faith in the Promiſes of the bleſſed Iſſue out of all their Afflictions: *All things work together for the Good of thoſe who love God.* Our Love to God is the Reflection of his Love to us, that is powerful ſo to order all Evils, that they ſhall harmoniouſly conſpire to our eternal Happineſs. The Impreſſion of this in the Spirits of God's Chil-

Iſa. 33. *ult.*

Children, makes them patient and ſubmiſſive with Reſignation under all Afflictions. 'Tis certain the faſtening of the Mind in Contemplation of an excellent Object, may cauſe ſo ſtrong a Diverſion, that bodily Pains are much mitigated. The Martyrs, by the powerful Impreſſion of the glorious Reward, ſeem'd to be in an Extaſy, without Feeling in the midſt of their cruel Sufferings. The Prophet *Habakkuk* triumphantly declares, *Altho the Fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall Fruit be in the Vines: the Labour of the Olive ſhall fail, and the Fields ſhall yield no Meat: The Flock ſhall be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhall be no Herd in the Stalls.* Tho all the Supports and Comforts of Life fail, *yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* Joy is the Affection of Proſperity; but as the ſcalding Drops of God's Wrath upon the Conſcience turn all the Comforts of a Man into Torment, ſo the cordial Drops of his Love change Afflictions into Conſolations.

3. I will ſhew that the Pardon of our Sins produces an excellent Temper and Diſpoſition of Soul to praiſe God. Love to the Benefactor, and Joy in the Benefit, are the Incentives of Thankfulneſs.

They

They tune the Heart and Tongue in the Muſick of Praiſe. When they are raiſed to a Flame, they have a kind of Charm, of Rapture and extatick Force, and tranſport the Soul above it ſelf in Expreſſions of Praiſe. Theſe holy Affections in the Angels and Saints above are in their Exaltation: and the Circle of their Employment is, to acknowledg and admire, to reverence and magnify God, for his abſolute Excellencies, and his relative Benefits. Love and Joy are regulated by their Objects and Motives. Exceeding Love and Joy, when terminated on worldly things, are exceeding Folly: they are empty and vaniſhing, a ſudden Blaze that dies in a Moment. But the Pardon of our Sins infinitely endears God to us, and produces a ſubſtantial permanent Joy. His Love, tho our Hearts be as hard as a Rock, as cold and dead as the Grave, will melt us, and kindle a holy Heat of Affection, a Love ſingular and ſupreme to God, according to the Excellency of the Benefit. Love will ingeminate the Praiſes of God: *Thou art my God, I will praiſe thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.* Our Joy in the Benefit will be according to our extreme want of it, and the

Pſal. 118.

the Strength of our Deſires to obtain it. Without the Pardon of our Sins, *it had been better for us we had never been born*; or made in a lower Rank of Creatures uncapable of Damnation. According to the Conviction of the Greatneſs of our Miſery, our Longings will be for Deliverance: *The Deſire accompliſh'd is a Tree of Life.* The Tree of Life was in the midſt of Paradiſe, the Centre of its Pleaſures. According to the Degrees of our Deſires, ſuch is the Sweetneſs of Fruition. Now when the Soul is overwhelm'd with the fearful Apprehenſions of everlaſting Death, how ardent are the Deſires of Pardon? how unſatisfied without it? and what Impreſſions of Joy are felt from the ſealing its Pardon? *Solomon* tells us, *That good News from a far Country is like cooling Water to one burnt up with Thirſt.* How much more refreſhing is the Teſtimony of the bleſſed Comforter from Heaven, to one fainting in the Eſtuations of Conſcience, that his Sins are pardoned? *David* expreſſes his Valuation and earneſt Longing for the Favour of God, and his joyful Senſe of it: *There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any Good? Lord, lift up the Light of thy Countenance upon me: Thou* Pſal. 4.

haſt

haſt put Gladneſs in my Heart, more than in the time that their Corn and Wine increaſed: An inward cordial Joy, that far exceeds the counterfeit Joy in the Countenance, that ends in Heavineſs. Now the thankful Senſe of a Benefit is correſpondent to the joyful Senſe of it, and the joyful according to our languiſhing longing after it. Fervent Prayer for the pardoning Mercy of God, and a frozen Acknowledgment of it, are utterly inconſiſtent. There is no Joy in the World ſo ſenſible and affecting, as the Joy of one ſaved from preſent Death. A condemned Man values and rejoices more in receiving two Lines where his Pardon is contained, than in the Conveyance of a Kingdom. *Hezekiah*, when under the Sentence of Death in his Sickneſs, how paſſionate were his Addreſſes for Recovery? how exuberant were his Joy and Thankfulneſs for his Reſcue from periſhing? *The living,* Iſa. 38. 19. *the living, he ſhall praiſe thee, as I do this day.* He reſolves to renew the Praiſes of his gracious Preſerver every day: Ver. 20. *The Lord ſaved me; therefore we will ſing my Songs to the ſtringed Inſtruments all the Days of our Life, in the Houſe of the Lord.* Had he ſo quick and warm a Senſe

Senſe of the Divine Mercy that ſaved him from the Grave, how much more ardent ſhould our Acknowledgments be for the ſaving us from Hell? If we have the Feeling of Sin, as we have of Sickneſs, and are as duly ſenſible how much the Life of the Soul, our excellent and immortal Part, is to be preferred before the Life of the frail and periſhing Body, our Joy and Thankfulneſs would be in the higheſt Elevation, in remembring forgiving Mercy. This will be the Argument of the high and everlaſting Praiſe of God in Heaven.

I ſhall conclude with this Advice, Let us not content our ſelves with verbal Acknowledgments of this real and glorious Benefit: Let our Thankſgiving be joined with Thankſdoing; then we ſhall be accepted. Of this we have the moſt comforting Aſſurance from God himſelf; *He that offers Praiſe glorifies me: and to him that orders his Converſation aright, I will ſhew the Salvation of God.* Pſal. 50. *ult.*

FINIS.

BOOKS writ by William Bates, *D. D. and ſold by* B. Aylmer.

THE Harmony of the Divine Attributes, in the Contrivance and Accompliſhment of Man's Redemption by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: Or Diſcourſes wherein is ſhewed, how the Wiſdom, Mercy, Juſtice, Holineſs, Power, and Truth of God, are glorified in that great and bleſſed Work.

Conſiderations of the Exiſtence of God, and of the Immortality of the Soul, with the Recompences of the future State. To which is now added, The Divinity of the Chriſtian Religion, *&c.*

The Four Laſt Things, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell, practically conſidered and applied.

The Danger of Proſperity diſcovered, in ſeveral Sermons.

The great Duty of Reſignation in Times of Affliction, *&c.*

A Funeral-Sermon on Dr. *Thomas Manton*, who deceaſed *October* 18, 1677. With the laſt publick Sermon Dr. *Manton* preached.

The Sure Trial of Uprightneſs, opened in ſeveral Sermons upon *Pſal.* 18. *v.* 23.

A Deſcription of the bleſſed Place and State of the Saints above, on *John* 14. 2. Preached at the Funeral of Mr. *Clarkſon.*

The Way to the higheſt Honour, on *John* 12. 26. Preached at the Funeral of Dr. *Jacomb.*

The ſpeedy Coming of Chriſt to Judgment, on *Rev.* 22. 12. Preached at the Funeral of Mr. *Benj. Aſhhurſt.*

A Sermon on the Death of the Late Queen *Mary.*